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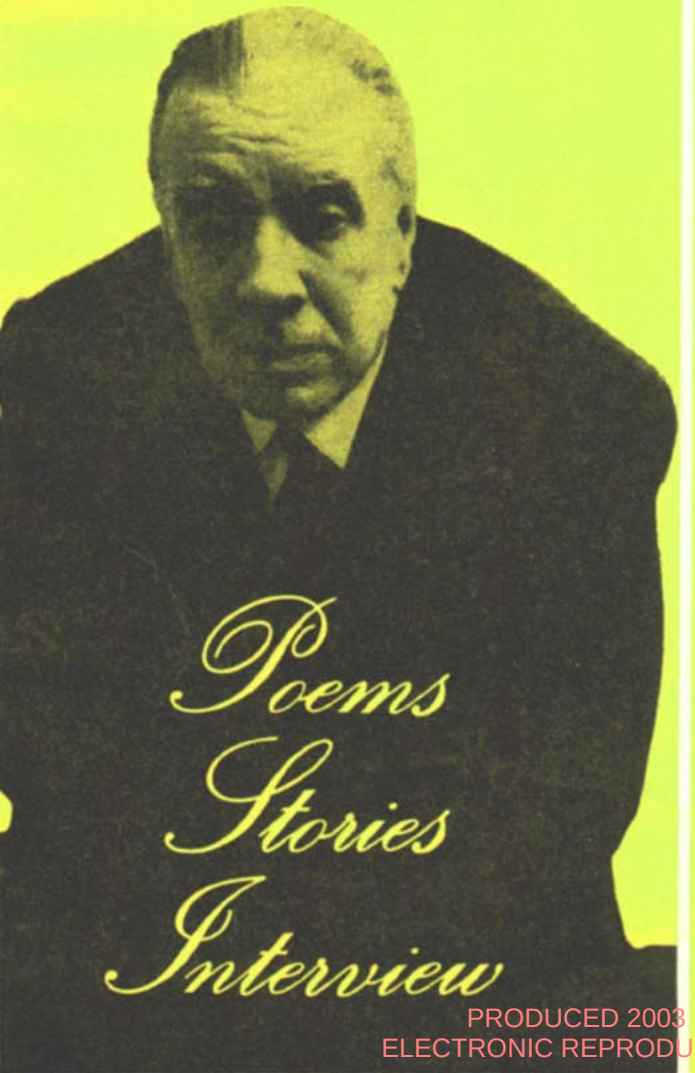
Jorge Luis Borges



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JORGE LUIS BORGES AN ANTHOLOGY

WEARY OF LABYRINTHS	3	*César Fernández Moreno*
THE INTRUDER (*story*)	15	*Jorge Luis Borges*
POEMS (I)	18	*Jorge Luis Borges*
ON TRANSLATING WITH BORGES	22	*Norman Thomas di Giovanni*
POEMS (II)	25	*Jorge Luis Borges*
THE OTHER DEATH (*story*)	32	*Jorge Luis Borges*
THE POLITICS OF DEPRIVATION	36	*David Marquand*
COLUMN	45	*Nefastus Dies*
NOTES & TOPICS		
A NEW RIGHT?	48	*Goronwy Rees*
ON CHANGING INTELLECTUAL FASHIONS	52	*Max Beloff*
THE LIBERATION FROM RIGHT REASON	56	*Erwin Scheuch*
THE CORPSE OF THE FREE UNIVERSITY	61	*Bernd Nellessen*
BOOKS & WRITERS		
UTOPIAN CRITICISM	65	*David Lodge*
LEFT, RIGHT & OTHER STEREOTYPES	75	*Rudolf Klein*
PHILOSOPHY & SANITY	79	*Alasdair MacIntyre*
POINTS OF THE COMPASS		
LETTER FROM HONG KONG	83	*Stanley Karnow*
LETTERS	92	
AUTHORS	96	

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César Fernandez Moreno

Weary of Labyrinths

An Interview with Jorge Luis Borges

THE EARLIEST MEMORIES *I have are of a garden, of a grillwork gate, of a rainbow, but on which side of the Plate I can't remember. They could belong to the suburb of Palermo, or to a country place of ours in Adrogué, or again they could belong to another country place, that of an uncle of mine, Francisco Haedo, in Pasa del Molino, in Montevideo.*

My memories are like that, quite vague, and I don't know on which side of the river to place them, on the Uruguayan side or the Argentine.

——And when exactly do you remember yourself in Buenos Aires?

BORGES: I was born on Tucumán Street, at the corner of Suipacha, in the same block in which Estanislao del Campo, who was an uncle of my grandfather's, died; I've re-visited the house but can remember nothing about it. My first memories are not of that house, which was like all the houses of that time. Let's say, in a smaller and more modest fashion, it was a house rather like the one now occupied by the Argentine Society of Writers: with two consecutive patios, the first with a tile floor patterned like a chessboard and with a well. At the bottom of the well, I later found out, there was always a turtle, put there to purify the water. My mother told me that when a house was rented or sold in those times, people would ask was there a turtle, and the answer would be: "Yes, sir, don't worry, there's a turtle." That's because it was believed that the turtle acted as a kind of filter which devoured insects, and no one bothered to think that the turtle at the same time not only did not make the water pure, but indeed made it impure. Not in Montevideo, though. In Montevideo they asked if there was a frog in the well. Yes, there were both turtles and frogs, and for years my mother and I drank turtle water, and since everybody did the same we never felt squeamish about it. I think now, though, that I wouldn't like to drink turtle water.

——But turtles and frogs are such stony sort of creatures....

BORGES: Yes, they are, and a bit abstract.

——Since this conversation is not addressed to an Argentine audience, I would like to talk as broadly as possible about your life and work.

BORGES: All right, we can call it work. But the word "work," in my case, I can only accept between quotes; I accept it as a metaphor, let us say, and that's all.

——You are a specialist in metaphors, so that if you accept my word as such it must be because in some way it refers to reality.

BORGES: Then let's say I accept it as hyperbole.

——I suppose you mean hyperbole in the sense that the word work *would be an exaggeration. Maybe so; this is one problem: do poets exaggerate reality or not, or do they merely transcribe it, or do they speak of a deeper reality, which in itself is exaggerated? This could be a first question.*

SINCE *the publication in* ENCOUNTER *of the first translations of Jorge Borges' work —"The Babylonian Lottery" (June 1962), "The Circular Ruins" and "The Library of Babel" (July 1962)—all received at the time with the delight of a discovery of some unknown master—his reputation has soared in Britain and America as well as on the European continent. He is widely recognised today as one of the major figures of contemporary literature. In this short anthology, which has been prepared by Alastair Reid and Norman Thomas di Giovanni (see also the Authors note on p. 96), we present some of Borges' new work together with his own comments, in the Interview, of how his fiction and poems have changed over the years.*

César Fernández Moreno is an Argentine critic and writer. The translation has been made by John C. Murchison.

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BORGES: Yes. The best thing a poet could do would be to accept the last of your solutions. It agrees with Aristotle that poetry is truer than history, since poetry is essentially truthful. Of course, in practice, one does what one can, not what one would like to do.

——What you are saying, then, is that the object of poetry is to say the truth about reality, to say how reality really is, at its deepest level.

BORGES: Yes, I don't think a poet says, or should say, new things. He should express instead what all men at some time have felt or will feel in the course of their lives. That is, he should strive for a verbal music, for those emotions which are the essence of all human life. The rest is mere novelty and can only be of interest to the historians of literature, not to literature itself.

——So that, in a sense, originality would be a secondary virtue in literature.

BORGES: Yes, except for being original in the sense of referring to the origins of things, that is, to essential origins. Chesterton tells us that if someone wished to feed exclusively on mahogany, poetry would not be able to express this. Instead, if a man happens to love and not be loved in return, or if he mourns the absence or the loss of someone, then poetry is able to express these situations precisely because they are commonplace. And that's why poetry is important, because it expresses eternal facts, facts that are related not only to the experience of the poet, but also to the emotional experience of the reader.

——Let's sidestep this word "work," *then, which you reject by putting between quotes, and go on to the word* "life." *Why don't you tell us something more about that childhood of yours which you once remembered as having passed in a library. You used to call it "a library of an almost limitless number of books in English."*

BORGES: Yes, that's true. My father had a large library. I used to be allowed to read any book, even those which are usually forbidden to children. For example, *The Book of A Thousand Nights and A Night*, in the translation by Captain Burton. I read the whole book, a book that I see now abounds in obscenities, none of which I noticed at the time because what mattered for me then was the magic of the thousand and one nights. I was so taken up by that magic that I read all the rest unaware of any other significance. But through the years, now, I have come to realise that in essence I've never left that library and that I go on reading those books. It happened to me with the *Quijote*. I read it in the Garnier edition. I don't know if you remember those red volumes with the gold lettering. Later my father's library was broken up. I read the *Quijote* in another edition, but I had the feeling that it wasn't the real *Quijote*. I asked a friend to get me the Garnier edition. He surprised me by later bringing me the book with the same steel engravings, the same footnotes, and also with the same *errata*. All that forms part of the book for me. I have it at home now, and I consider it the real *Quijote*.

——How did that leap come about, from one or the other side of the River Plate to Europe?

BORGES: When my father was forced to retire due to his blindness, my family decided to travel to Europe. And so ignorant were we of world history, especially of the immediate future of that history, that we set out in 1914 and got boxed up in Switzerland. Except for a trip to Italy, a country I could not appreciate at the time since I was still a boy. I did get to know Switzerland, though, and to love it.

——You've remembered that era, around 1927, as "grey and taut with rain."

BORGES: Yes, but that was long ago; I don't now. Now, upon returning to Switzerland after an absence of forty years, I felt a deep emotion and the sensation also of coming home to my own country. Because the experiences of youth took place there. Geneva is a city I know much better than Buenos Aires. Besides, Geneva can be known because it's a city of, let's say, natural size. Whereas Buenos Aires is a city already so extravagantly large that nobody knows it. Now especially, since my eyesight is declining and I haven't been able to read or write for the past twelve years, my Buenos Aires has narrowed. What I know of Buenos Aires now goes from the North-side to the Recoleta. I know the South-side quite well: I know Constitución and Barracas and then, towards the West-side, I know it up to the Once, because I have been giving my lectures there. And then, further on, there are parts of town I haven't seen in years. Palermo, for instance, because I found it so changed it hasn't made me want to go back. Although some of the old streets do remain, they are very few. And I went to Adrogué with my mother some two or three years ago, and we found everything so changed that we had to come back. All the old places had been sub-divided, the trees had vanished, the old buggies naturally had gone, and the city had been taken over by radios and motor-cycles.

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——And hasn't Geneva changed?

BORGES: The old part, no. European cities are better preserved.

——If you had the chance to live in Europe now would you do so, or do you consider yourself permanently attached to Buenos Aires?

BORGES: Yes, I think Buenos Aires is my destiny, but I wouldn't mind living in London, in Edinburgh . . . to visit, I suppose, or spend a season there. The Scandinavian countries are very pleasant. Yes, and then in Spain I found a city that impressed me greatly and which I didn't know, and that's Santiago de Compostela. It's because on our first trip we were in Castille, in the Balearic Islands, and in Andalusia, and I didn't get a chance to see the north. Portugal, on the other hand, I found very impressive. Portugal is a melancholy country, like Galicia.

——You, who are so cosmopolitan. . . .

BORGES: No, not at all, I'm not cosmopolitan.

——You're not? Still, in what we've discussed so far, you would appear to be quite cosmopolitan, in the sense of having a capacity to understand, love, and live in different parts of the world. What I wanted to say is that Paris is missing.

BORGES: The truth of the matter is that, scandalously enough, Paris has impressed me less than other cities. I understand that that would be enough to prove I'm not very Argentine. Argentines are much taken with Paris. Of Paris I have personal memories, of friendships, but not of the city; I've no images of the city. That, too, may be because when I was in Paris the first time I was just passing through, and the second time, my sight no longer allowed. . . .

TELL US SOMETHING *about your life in Madrid, when you were nineteen, and of your impressions of it now that you're the representative abroad of Argentine culture.*

BORGES: As far as the first is concerned, it was one of the most memorable times because I was just about to return to my country. It was a rather long season. I've no memory for dates, only for poems and for feelings. I was able to meet, in Madrid, the great Jewish-Andalusian poet Rafael Cansinos-Assens; I was saying good-bye to Europe, and in Cansinos-Assens I found something like the symbol of all culture, not only Western, but also Eastern. Talking to him was like talking with all the world's libraries; and he was, besides, an extraordinarily kind and indulgent man whose only defect was that of admiring writers much beneath himself. He always lived rather alone, and he was a splendid conversationalist. We used to get together, usually on Saturdays, at the Café Colonial. The meetings would begin quite early for Spain, around midnight, and they'd go on until dawn. The subjects were exclusively literary, since Cansinos, who was a bit the dictator—the courteous and kind dictator, a sort of Dr. Johnson of those meetings—didn't want to offend anybody, and wished to avoid anyone's name being mentioned. So, we'd choose a subject: rhyme, metaphor, verse, death, the sea, the city, and we'd toss it around until (as Capdevila used to say) "the day came in through the lamps," and then we'd accompany Cansinos-Assens back home to his house near the Viaduct on Morería Street. As a boy, I'd known literary reunions at home. Evaristo Carriego, our neighbour, was a very good friend of ours. I also remember Carlos de Soussens, Marcelo del Mazo, and other people of the period. I'd spent four years in Geneva. I went through high-school there, I studied Latin and then German, but I didn't frequent literary circles. And in Spain I was admitted to the literary scene and was offered that splendid Spanish hospitality, which has just been given to me again on my return to Spain after an absence of forty years. I found the same hospitality as before, the same literary fervour, and the same capacity, which we lack here, to talk extensively about literature. One would say that in Buenos Aires, where that passion once existed (I knew it in the gatherings presided over by Macedonio Fernández)—one would say that now that passion has been replaced by a passion for politics. It's very difficult to find people who are ready to speak about literature and who will do it for sheer pleasure, hedonistically. But I found that on my return to Spain. Although the truth is that the first time I went to Spain, I was already returning, because like most Argentines I already had a lot of Spain in my blood. I felt it even more because in Geneva I'd grown used to speaking French. I admire French literature greatly, but after four or five years the fact of returning to a country where one's native tongue is spoken is an important experience: the fact of not having to use a foreign language, even when it's one as admirable as French.

——And what about the poems you wrote in that period, in the first stages of "ultraísmo"?

BORGES: I remember the period as one of friendship and fervour, but I think that what we wrote was hardly very original.

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——Have you re-read lately what you wrote then? Or taken a look at the collection of the review Ultra*?*

BORGES: What I wrote, yes. It was very bad.

——Do you think so?

BORGES: Very poor.

——Of course, they were early works, but they weren't all that bad.

BORGES: No, no. The first poem I ever published appeared in a Sevillian review. It was called "Hymn to the Sea," and tried to resemble Whitman. It tried in vain. Just recently I've written a poem to the sea which I hope isn't like the other one.

——Have you compared them?

BORGES: No.

——You don't think it bears any resemblance to the earlier poem?

BORGES: No, no, no. I hope not. No, let's not be such pessimists. I thought the first poem had a touch of Walt Whitman, but it barely resembled Santos Chocano.

——While, on the contrary, I imagine the present poem does resemble the sea.

BORGES: I don't know if it resembles the sea. Well, it resembles a mythological sea, perhaps.

——When you returned to Buenos Aires in 1921 after those first years in Spain you were deeply, emotionally moved. This is clear in your poetry of the time. Francisco Luis Bernárdez has told me that you used to say at the time that you had "chucked your Latinity into the Maldonado stream." Do you remember that phrase, or that stream, now channelled underground?

BORGES: Yes, I remember that phrase; but I think that, luckily, I've been able to recover some of my Latinity. And fortunately, they've done away with that ditch. Those words were in response to a moment of nationalism that I think we could call slummy. But in spite of what I'm saying now some of the mud of the Maldonado must have stuck to me because I've just written a number of *milongas*—of lyrics for *milongas* and tangos—for Guastavino and Astor Piazzolla. So that really I see no need to be ashamed of the Maldonado. Besides, I think that one of the virtues of the Argentine spirit is also hospitality, that is to say, the fact that we can be interested in many countries, cultures, subjects. I think that Victoria Ocampo, for example, when she is accused of being partial to the foreign and told she "isn't Argentine," could say that she delights in the foreign precisely because she is Argentine. I think this is one of our best qualities. I think we aren't, or we shouldn't be, a parochial country, or effusively regionalist, although neither do I want to exclude regionalism from our poetry. I think we should try to be, or at any rate try to understand, all sorts of things, not merely what happens here and now.

——I've heard an anecdote about a friend of yours in the U.S. who asked you over to hear some tangos, and you were afraid he'd make you listen to those tangos which you dislike so much.

BORGES: Yes, a friend of mine, a Paraguayan, Doctor Insfran, a colleague of mine at the University of Texas, invited me over to his house to listen to tangos. I went, I heard those tangos —I'm going to make a dreadful *faux pas*—I heard those tangos I particularly detest: "La Cumparsita," "Caminito," "*flaca, fané y descangallada....*" And I thought: all this is flabby, it's vile, it has no importance. And I was very uncomfortable because, of course, my friend wanted to afford me some pleasure, an emotion, by making me listen to those things. Meanwhile, I was thinking: what can I do so that Dr. Insfran won't realise that these tangos seem horrible and sentimental to me? At that moment I felt that, like Martín Fierro, "two large tears were streaking my face." Which is to say that beyond my intellectual judgment there was something in me that went deeper than my opinions, that made me enjoy those tangos.

YOU'VE WRITTEN that when you returned to Buenos Aires you felt that the years spent in Europe—

BORGES: Were like a dream, yes.

——And that you would always live in Buenos Aires.

BORGES: Yes, I may have said that. But here in Buenos Aires one loses so many things, don't you think?

——Still, unforgettably, you met Macedonio Fernández.

BORGES: Yes, he was the person who produced the strongest impression on me. I always like to speak about Macedonio Fernández. The truth is that I've met many famous people, and

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that none of them, save some women—who are memorable in themselves—has produced such an impression on me as Macedonio Fernández. Macedonio was, paradoxically, a remarkable conversationalist, and a man of few words. I remember his gatherings at the café on the corner of Jujuy and Rivadavia, in the square of the Once. I remember that those meetings took place on Saturdays, like the others of Cansinos-Assens. At the time I read a great deal and went out very seldom, but my whole week was ablaze with the fact, with the justification, that on Saturday I'd take part in Macedonio's gathering. Macedonio was a very good friend of my father's; he lived quite near us and I could have seen him any other day. But at the same time I thought I had no right to him, that in order to give Macedonio's Saturday its full value I had to ignore him for the rest of the week. And so, we'd meet with Macedonio, and there were people who went there just to hear him talk. At the end of the evening, which was an Argentine evening, that is to say, shorter than a Spanish evening—at the end of all that time, Macedonio had spoken three or four times, no more; he had risked an observation. That observation was never affirmative, it was a shy question, and neither was it directed to all of us; he would turn to his companion and say: "Hey, don't you think...?" And then the question would come, and the question alone would throw a dazzling light on what we were saying. Three or four asides from that grey person who was Macedonio Fernández were enough. Macedonio looked at once like Mark Twain and Paul Valéry. I remember his features, the grey hair, the moustache. He was much flattered by the first of those resemblances (he was a great admirer of Twain's); on the other hand, he was never able to work up much enthusiasm for Valéry. Macedonio left some writings, mostly the *Papeles de Recienvenido*, which were published by Alfonso Reyes and which I organised somewhat for publication. He also left *No toda es vigilia la de los ojos abiertos*; and he left some poems. But I think that Macedonio, in spite of those admirable books which are really worth reading, didn't give himself completely in his writing. I think the real Macedonio was to be found in his conversation. He lived modestly. I remember he once told us: "My last address was such-and-such Liberty Street." Every time he'd move, he'd leave behind in a desk drawer an enormous pile of manuscripts. We were aware of this and we recriminated, telling him it was a shame that all that work should be lost. And then Macedonio, in all sincerity, said to me: "But listen, do you think I get that many bright ideas? Do you really think I'm rich enough to lose anything? I'm always thinking up the same things; I can't lose anything." And so perhaps hundreds of pages have been lost, which is a pity, and all due to Macedonio's poor opinion of his creative powers.

——There's the anecdote about the poem "Elena Bellamuerte," which was discovered in a cookie jar of one of his friends twenty years later. Do you think he assigned any value to his manuscripts, that he thought it important to leave things in writing?

BORGES: No. I think Macedonio was interested in, let's say, the discovery of truth. He had had a correspondence with William James. I remember a passage in William James in which he states that sometimes, when he was young, he spent whole nights awake, thinking, What is the Universe? What is Time? What is Life? Who am I? I think Macedonio used to do the same. Macedonio would have loved to discover truth. He told me he doubted whether truth was communicable, that he thought Berkeley and Schopenhauer and Kant had discovered it but that they hadn't been able to communicate it completely. He believed—and this is a mystical idea—that truth is ineffable and incommunicable. The same as when Moses asks God his name, God answers, "I am that I am." Which is another way of saying, really, that truth isn't enough. But Macedonio also believed that the discovery of truth wasn't so difficult, that the discovery of the truth about the universe could come to us at any moment. He once told me that if he could spend some time in the country, lying out on a meadow, forgetting the world, Macedonio Fernández, and Berkeley and Schopenhauer and metaphysics, it would be quite easy at a certain moment to understand everything. But he added that he didn't think it would be possible to communicate that experience in words. At some point later on it occurred to me that words always presuppose a shared experience. For example, I can mention the colour yellow and you will understand me because we've all seen yellow. On the other hand, if a mystic has had an immediate experience of God, or of truth (which comes to be the same thing), he can't communicate that experience to others because for him that sound belongs to that experience, while for the rest of us it is simply a word in the dictionary, a word of rather vague sense.

——I seem to remember that that idea, which you shared with Macedonio, you applied in your book on Lugones, where you present as the hypothetical reason behind Lugones' suicide the notion that he had discovered the verbal reality that he was Lugones; that reality is, in your own words,

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"incommunicable and outrageous." And that's how, on seeing that verbalisation is useless for the communication of reality, Lugones found the basis for his decision.

BORGES: Yes, I think I said that on the last page. A great deal of reality is verbal; but not all reality is verbal, and I think Lugones must have felt that. It's a pity that he did. It would have been better if he had communicated, or tried to communicate, that anguish. I used to know whole pages of Lugones by heart, but Lugones personally was a solitary and dogmatic man, not at all an easy man to get to know, and besides, there was no reason why he should give himself to an unknown youngster like myself. Macedonio was easier to get to know than Lugones. Macedonio was a man given to doubts and Lugones was a man given to assertions. Lugones loved to coin phrases, and conversation with him was difficult; he tended to resolve everything with a phrase which was like a period and end of paragraph. And then you had to start again, to look for another subject, which was settled by another phrase. I remember that a friend of mine, Néstor Ibarra, was very interested in blues and spirituals. He tried to speak to Lugones, he tried to tell Lugones about them. And Lugones answered him with a phrase which may have been epigrammatic but which had nothing to do with blues or spirituals, of which possibly Lugones knew nothing. He said: "Let's face it: blacks are just high-jumping devils." The phrase may have sounded clever, but it had nothing to do with blues or spirituals. But obviously it was a period and end of paragraph, it closed that subject. Then you'd try another subject and he'd settle it in the same way, dogmatically. His conversation was dazzling, but rather exhausting.

Affirmations, I think, didn't correspond to his own thoughts, but rather to the need for saying something extraordinary. For instance, he spoke of an English or a French film; he hadn't seen it, but he had to pass judgment on it, and to pass judgment always without appeal. So he said: "No. Cinema must be left to the Americans, just as fashion must be left to the French." Period. That's that. Finis. I think he said that possibly because he liked to have the last word. If he said so, we could no longer speak about cinema; the most one could do was to ask him which American films he liked best, and as we were afraid he hadn't seen very many.... He needed above all to dominate the conversation. Everything he said was final. And since we all felt great respect for him....

——Silence was the only comment. So with Borges there was no dialogue, in other words.

BORGES: With Lugones.

——I'm sorry; I hope there's no psychologist around.

BORGES: Instead, the conversation with Fernández Moreno—your father—was very easy, very agreeable. Because he was a man who wasn't too sure of what he asserted. Or, better said, like Macedonio Fernández he may have had his certainties, but because he was so courteous, he presented them as questions. Instead of saying, "This is so," he'd say: "But if? ... perhaps? ... wouldn't it be? ..." Or, "Couldn't you also say? ..."

——Tell me something: how does one explain that two people as absolutely contemporary as Macedonio Fernández and Lugones, who were even born the same year, should have had nothing in common, nothing at all?

BORGES: They were great friends.

——That's news to me. How could those two perfectly opposite people be friends?

BORGES: They were great friends, and then Macedonio, I don't know why, withdrew, I don't know the details, but I do know that Macedonio began drawing away from Lugones. I think Macedonio was mentally a very active person, but was a very lazy writer, whereas Lugones lived entirely for his work. For instance, although he moved in the bohemian circle of the modernists—he was a great friend of Darío and of Jaimes Freyre—I don't think he was very much of a night-owl. I don't think he enjoyed literary meetings or dinners.

Macedonio Fernández was more important as a thinker than as a writer. I think that he—his thoughts—did me a lot of good, and I started out by plagiarising him devotedly. But I think that Macedonio Fernández' style did me harm; certain obsessive characteristics of his. He tried not to speak of "life" but of "living," not of "dreams" but of "dreaming," and to use the word "chore" continually, to use really pointless neologisms. For example, one speaks of the fine arts, *bellas artes*; well; Macedonio preferred speaking of poetry as *belarte*. Which really doesn't add anything, does it? But he liked that sort of thing. And then he wanted, and he proposed this to me, that we all sign ourselves as "JOHN DOE" and, underneath, *"An Artist of Buenos Aires."* Macedonio suffered from a ridiculous nationalism, really. For example, he believed that Unamuno began to think when he knew he was being read in Buenos Aires. It's an absurd idea. He'd say: "But, hey, what do you think of that, even the spicks are starting

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to think now, because they know we're going to read their works here."

——*And couldn't he have been saying that ironically?*

BORGES: Oh, no, he meant it. Macedonio—my mother made me see this once—admired every president simply because he'd been elected and the Argentine people could not be wrong. He used to tell me, for instance, that Irigoyen was a man of genius. And then seeing him three or four days after Uriburu's revolution, he told me: "Well, old boy, I think Irigoyen was an oddball." But he was an oddball because he'd been overthrown. And then Macedonio became an admirer of Uriburu's. Because how could the Argentines possibly be wrong? He thought, in the same way, that the famous clown Parravicini was a great actor. He hadn't seen him act, but since he was so popular.... And he admired—of course, without ever having read him—Martínez Zuviría: Martínez Zuviría's novels sold well.

——*It was a form of Romanticism, of believing in the people at all costs. And Macedonio, in turn, was declared an oddball by an Argentine literary critic, Anderson Imbert in his* History of Literature.

BORGES: Yes, there was a touch of oddity about him, all right. But there's Blake, there's Swinburne. Perhaps both of them fall into that category, don't you think?

——*During Macedonio's life he received little attention and was considered mad; but now that he's been revaluated, re-read and reviewed, he's being considered a genius.*

BORGES: But I think his genius is the kind that exists in just a few pages. He wanted his to be a Socratic sort of influence.

——*Nevertheless, Macedonio has been an extraordinary influence on contemporary Argentine literature.*

BORGES: You think he has been influential?

——*Yes, he's very widely read and has a great following, and besides I believe that a great deal of his influence has been exercised through you—in regard to style and thought. I've noticed that those things you wrote in Spain before returning to Argentina, and which you now consider as rather feeble and unworthy of being published, had a striking resemblance with this master whom as yet you didn't know.*

BORGES: No, unless we were alike through the mutual influence of Unamuno. But I don't think that Unamuno was very interested in matters of style. He sustained, for instance, a theory of poetry which I now find entirely false. He stated that he had little interest in reading *soniditos,* pretty sounds. Now I believe that sound is very important in verse, more important than ideas.

——*Well, you've entirely reversed Unamuno's stand.*

BORGES: But the whole thing's self-evident. There just aren't that many ideas.

——*Neither are there that many sounds.*

BORGES: Yes, but look here, isn't there also music? I think that the music is important, too. If you say: *"la princesa está pálida en su silla de oro,"* you have a rather nice line. But if you say: *"en su silla de oro está pálida la princesa"* you really haven't said very much, have you?

——*Yes, from a musical point of view the first example does produce pleasure for the listener, without a doubt. It seems to me a "pretty sound," as Unamuno said. I don't think that's enough, I think poetry can give us more than that.*

BORGES: It can give us more than "the princess is pale on her golden chair," certainly. But in that style? Because I think a sensitive person feels that the line in Spanish is a lovely line. In addition to that it seems to answer a sort of emotional state, it seems to answer a sort of monotony, a nostalgia.... Just the other day, in my class on English literature, I was quoting some lines from Stevenson and I realised that I couldn't translate them because their strength lies in a kind of vibration, something like steel. You understand this, don't you?

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Dig the grave and let me lie.
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
"Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

You see, it vibrates like steel. Translate it into Spanish, *"Alegre viví y alegre he muerto,"* and it's nothing, but

Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will....

All those acute sounds, all those monosyllabic words....

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GETTING BACK *to your style, pre- and post-Macedonio, to your style while in Madrid and to your style after your return here, I don't find any major differences. Even your style of wit: Macedonio's and yours have a lot in common.*

BORGES: There are even words attributed to Macedonio which belong to a first cousin of mine, and which Macedonio later adopted because my cousin would never have thought of them if he hadn't been associated with Macedonio. For instance, that one about the lecture or concert: "There were so few people there that anyone absent couldn't have got in."

——That phrase belongs to Guillermo Juan. It isn't Macedonio's.

BORGES: No, but if Guillermo Juan hadn't known Macedonio he would never have thought of it. As always, a conversation has a certain style and the style in that case was set by Macedonio, of course, not by a boy of seventeen.

——You were all Macedonio, in one way or another. In so far as style, at any rate. And in so far as doctrine, while you were in Spain when you were young did you feel the influence of German Expressionism very strongly?

BORGES: Yes. I think that expressionism of all modern movements was the most significant. Because when they were merely playing formalistic games in France, expressionism, like surrealism, was becoming interested in mysticism, in magic, in the cabala. There was also a sort of pacifism.... Expressionism was mystical. I won't say that Macedonio imitated; I'd say that Macedonio thought all over again what Berkeley had thought and what Schopenhauer had thought and what the Hindus had thought. But of course he didn't like that idea, he thought it pedantic.

——Which idea?

BORGES: The idea of other literatures and other periods. He thought that a man could arrive through his own efforts at everything.

——And Macedonio, sheltered by that belief, neglected his philosophical education. Can one think of him as a philosophical primitive, or was he a man of great culture, one who had read a great deal?

BORGES: No, Macedonio hadn't read very much, but those few books he did read, he read very well. He read Berkeley and Schopenhauer and William James. Later we got him to read Bergson. At first he didn't want to read him simply because he'd never read him before. But Macedonio was a very loyal man. For a long time he maintained, for instance, that Sir Walter Scott, a writer who quite frankly has never impressed me much, was one of the world's best novelists. But I think he said this simply because he'd read him when he was very young.

——Or perhaps simply because he was successful, like Martínez Zuviría.

BORGES: And also because he was successful, yes.

IN THAT LIBRARY *of my father's I read a great many stories and novels. But for a long period I judged myself to be unworthy of taking up the story as an author, even though stories were my favourite reading. Then I had an accident and went through a period of insomnia laced with nightmares. They told me I had been near death, they had operated on me, and when I left the hospital I didn't know whether I'd recovered my mental integrity, so to speak. I had written quite a few poems and hundreds of short reviews. I thought: if I try to write a short review and can't do it, I'm through intellectually; but if I try a new form and fail, then it won't be so bad, because there's no reason why I should write stories. And besides, that will prepare me to accept the fact that I can no longer write. And so I wrote my first story.*

——You said, in a speech you gave in 1945, when...

BORGES: Yes, but in 1945 I was someone else, so I can't be held responsible for what I said then; I can take issue with the Borges of 1945. I can also agree with him, of course.

——That's precisely what I was going to ask you about, the fight between your different selves. At that time you said what you've just now repeated: that you feel you've never left your father's library. And you also asked yourself then: from now on, what else can I do other than weave and unweave fantasies derived from those contained in the books I read? Still, your subsequent development has shown that you've returned with a great deal of fervour—and perhaps with even more fervour than in 1921—to lyric poetry.

BORGES: The lyric poems I now write are poems which have nothing to do with revolu-

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tionary tendencies. They are poems that are well within, or so I hope, the tradition of Spanish poetry. And, of course, the work of such men as Darío and Lugones, your father Fernández Moreno, Banchs, and others, is already within that tradition, so that I don't think I'm innovating. There's also a physical reason which I think I've explained. The fact is, I'm the sort of person who takes a great deal of care about what he writes. That is to say, I abound in drafts. But for the past twelve years I have not been able to read, I have not been able to write, and this condemns me to mental drafts. Obviously, it's very difficult to write a story in your mind. And that's one of the reasons why I've gone back to poetry; and I've gone back to regular poetry not only because I find free verse much more difficult than regular verse, but also because of the mnemonic advantages of metre and rhyme. In other words, I'm walking down Florida Street, or riding the subway, or walking around Barracas —that's a neighbourhood where I love to walk, because if I stick close to the wall of the railroad station I can go for quite a while without the problem, for me at times almost insoluble, of crossing from one sidewalk to another—or walking around the National Library, which is a peaceful and propitious labyrinth. And so I go about composing my sonnets, in search of all possible variations, and then, when I've arrived at a more or less definitive form—and generally it's less—I dictate them. After about a week I touch them up, and then I send them on to the press. I'm trying to say that metrical composition, especially when it is also rhymed, is a far easier task, for someone who's almost blind, than the writing of prose. Because a long paragraph in prose is very difficult to remember, whereas verse lines are easy, especially when one is caught up in one's subject, and is writing them oneself. But I think that even without this visual deficiency, without this near blindness which is now mine, I would somehow have returned to regular verse anyway because I find it more satisfactory. Which is not to say that I reject free verse; but I think that for free verse to be something more than prose in a different typographical disguise, it's necessary to have behind it the drive of a psalmist or of a Walt Whitman, so that I rarely try my hand at free verse and I usually do it timidly and without too much faith in the results. On the other hand, in regular verse one is almost carried along by the form. And besides, when one has made up one's mind, when one becomes resigned to a line, it leads you to another line that will rhyme with the first; and since the possibilities of rhyme are not unlimited, the work is made easier, especially when you've had some experience with this sort of thing.

——With your invariable and almost invincible modesty, you've managed to give us a quite modest explanation of your return to the lyric—through your physical difficulties and the practical advantages you attribute to rhymed verse. But why can't we entertain the hypothesis that you've returned to lyric poetry because in these years of your life you've felt a deep need to express yourself as an individual and to show yourself alive and vibrant in your writing, as perhaps was not the case in your essays or in your stories? That's the feeling we readers get nowadays from you. That in your recent sonnets, and underneath that weak formal structure, the personality of Borges shows through strongly, a personality which, until now, your writing in certain forms had somehow hidden beneath the verbal brilliance.

BORGES: Well, I'm very grateful for your generous interpretation.

——It's a perception, Borges, not an interpretation.

BORGES: But the fact is that, for some unknown reason, I've left off inventing fantastic stories and, instead, have tried to communicate my own experience. That is, to communicate those experiences in the way that poetry can communicate them; I mean to say, without being indiscreet and without being reticent either. And if I've had any success, so much the better, because I now see before me a long series of possible poems, and all of them will be intimate, even if perhaps circumstances may be invented for the purposes either of adding verisimilitudes or of subtracting things far too real to be told.

I think I've written a story lately (it has come out in the latest edition of *El Aleph* and is called *The Intruder*[1]), which completely satisfies me, more so than other stories of mine. It's a story that takes place in a small town some fifty miles from Buenos Aires at some vague date towards the end of the last century. I've chosen a distant date because, as I've said to many writers, one shouldn't write about contemporary events, since if one does, one's contemporaries immediately set about looking for errors. For example, that the sort of people who hang about such-and-such a bar on such-and-such a street don't speak that way. I met a young man a short time ago who wanted to portray exactly the atmosphere of a certain tea-room at the corner of Suipacha and Juncal. And I warned him not to do that because people would come up at once and tell him: "That's terrible, nobody in that part of town ever speaks like that." Instead, in this story of mine, I say

[1] Published in this number of ENCOUNTER.

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it took place in Turdera; I place it in a past which could be either the beginning of this century or the end of the last. And as nobody knows how people were then—and neither, of course, do I—one can speak with greater freedom.

——*At any rate, no one could find fault with it.*

BORGES: No. But if a writer decides to write *the* novel about the Delta people, it's quite possible for others to find mistakes in it. Certain gentlemen have devoted their time to finding mistakes in *Don Segundo Sombra*. For instance, that it's silly for him to walk into a store and ask for a *pack* of cigarettes; and it's true, because when I was a boy, one asked for a *bundle*. But what can that possibly matter?

I recall a rather nice phrase about Kipling, by an English writer, which runs: "The typical English soldier (who, of course, does not exist)...." Naturally, because there isn't an English soldier, as there isn't a typical *gaucho*, but there is a Mr. So-and-so, who lived in such-and-such a place. "Miss So-and-so is the typical society girl"; yes, she could be, but if one gets to know her one finds out that she's not the typical society girl, but simply So-and-so, sister of some other girl, cousin of some other one, who has travelled to such-and-such places. I realise we're getting into the Aristotelian and Platonic argument, whether archetypes exist or only individuals.

——*In what form do you feel more at home? It would seem to be in the story form.*

BORGES: And in some sonnets. I think that a sonnet of mine on Spinoza hasn't come out too badly. And a poem on blindness, called *Poem of the Gifts*. There are other things of mine I don't particularly care for, but still, one writes what one can. Of recent essays, there's one called *The Wall and the Books*, which I think is pretty fair. It's about the Chinese emperor who wanted to build the Great Wall and at the same time destroyed all the books in an effort to wipe out the past. I think the Chinese Communists are doing the same thing now without realising that they are reverting to an ancient tradition.

The important thing is that four or five pages of an author last. That's why anthologies do writers a great favour. When one reads all a writer's books, generally the writer loses, since one finds that what's written so well in some pages is repeated more unfortunately in others. Right now I'd like to write a good many realistic stories.

——*Realistic?*

BORGES: Yes. I've grown weary of labyrinths and of mirrors and of tigers and of all that sort of thing. Especially when others are using them.

——*You're probably tired of all those others.*

BORGES: That's the advantage of imitators. They cure one of one's literary ills. Because one thinks: there are so many people doing that sort of thing now, there's no need for one to do it any more. Now let the others do it, and good riddance.

——*Your entry into realism seems like a fine try, but you're hardly on the true road with the story of* The Intruder, *since you set it in Turdera and in an era you don't know, so that it's still a fantastic story, even though the characters may be real.*

BORGES: But I think I can sense those people. Besides, I like having written a story with toughs in it where there isn't a single fight, or a showdown, or a "picturesque scene." In fact, quite the opposite of *Man of the Red Corner*,[2] which is a story I dislike very much.

——*Perhaps with* Man of the Red Corner *we're in the same situation as with that first poem to the sea. It was your first story, as far as I know.*

BORGES: Yes, it was. It's too contrived. You notice that in the *Milonga de Albornoz* in the first version—because there was a first version—I'd put in more local colour. I'd written—how does it go?

En el bajo del Retiro
ya le han perdido la cuenta
de amores y de trucadas
hasta el alba y de entreveros
a fierro con los sargentos,
con sureros y norteros.

[*On the banks of the Retiro*
they've long ago lost count
of his loves and of his gambling
until dawn, and of the showdowns
with knives and the law,
with North-side and South-side gangs.]

It may be that *sureros y norteros* is too archaic. Nobody speaks of *sureros* or *norteros* in Buenos Aires any more. And so I changed it to *con propios y forasteros*—with his own and rival gangs.

——*That's much more natural.* Sureros y norteros *is in tune with that other anecdote you once told us: that you'd bought a dictionary of slang in order to write your first books of poems.*

BORGES: Of Argentine slang. Yes, it's something like that. I heard people say *sureros* and *norteros* when I was a boy, but nobody uses the terms any longer. Instead, with *con propios*

[2] Published in ENCOUNTER, July 1964.

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y forasteros I think the verse flows more smoothly. *Sureros y norteros,* on the other hand, stumps you for a moment. You have to try to understand, and then you have to think that they come from the South-side and the North-side of Buenos Aires. It has to be worked out. But the new line doesn't.

——*I think that's the road to simplification and simplicity that every writer takes during the course of his life. And among the poems you love, does there figure by any chance your most often recited poem, the* Mythical (*previously* Mythological) Founding of Buenos Aires?[3]

BORGES: No, that's very bad.

——*It's not bad, its very noble.*

BORGES: Noble, my eye! That really is a contrived poem.

——*It's a poem around an idea, and it's a poem that speaks of an ideal Buenos Aires, of a Buenos Aires of the mind. And yet, through that basic—*

BORGES: I'm going to wind up by quoting Chesterton: "I've spent my life finding out that others were right." That's not bad, and it's quite valiant, don't you think?

——*It's a way of being right oneself, really.*

BORGES: It's something Lugones would never have said, for example.

——*That's exactly what he wouldn't have said. One might even add that he committed suicide in order not to say it.*

BORGES: Yes, that's true. Because Lugones was intellectually arrogant.

——*To put an end to the subject of forms, have you ever thought of or have you ever dreamed about writing a novel instead of a story?*

BORGES: No, never.

——*Why?*

BORGES: Because I couldn't do it. I'm dreadfully lazy. A novel requires a vast amount of filling out, naturally. If there's too much padding in a mere three pages of my writing, in three hundred there'd be nothing but padding. Stevenson, whom I always seem to be quoting, used to say that it would be ideal for the ornamental to be one with the essential, or for what is used as a connecting device to merge with the rest. Let's put it this way: you have two essential scenes, two essential chapters. You need other chapters to serve as a link between them. Ideally, you wouldn't be able to tell which is the link. But that's very difficult, and the longer the work the more difficult it becomes.

[3] Published in this issue.

——*Ideally, everything would be essential.*

BORGES: Everything essential, yes. Besides, there's the problem of sight now. I have to deal in short pieces, since my drafts must be mental.

——*Perhaps you could have written novels some time back.*

BORGES: Novels haven't impressed me as much as stories. That's what happened. For example, in the case of a writer I like very much, Kipling: I like his stories better than his novels. But I'm not going to say I prefer Cervantes' stories to the *Quijote,* because I'm not that mad. Anyway, the novel is a form that may pass, doubtless will pass; but I don't think the story will.

——*Why not?*

BORGES: It's so much older.

——*Is it more useful, more human, more necessary?*

BORGES: And also, even if there were a stop to writing stories, there wouldn't be to telling them. I don't think that novels could go on being re-told, do you? Take the *Quijote* as an example of a great novel. The *Quijote* can be read, and it can be re-read a number of times. But I don't know if you could relate it orally. If you just tried to tell about it, you'd sound rather foolish. Or let's suppose a person has become saturated with the *Quijote* and has to tell us about it. I don't think he could say very much. What can be re-told is something quite inferior. Perhaps a detective story.

——*And you think that a story can be re-told orally? You've just told me about* The Intruder, *which I haven't yet read. My idea of* The Intruder *is as vague as if you'd told me the story of* Don Quijote.

BORGES: I haven't told you the story, really, but I think I could do so. I think I've told it to you only in the most economical kind of way. Nowadays the novelist is considered superior to those writing in other forms, just as it was believed at one time that the writer of epic poetry was superior, or the author of a five-act drama. . . .

APROPOS *of your influences and imitators, what do you think has been your main influence on others, your thought or your style?*

BORGES: My style. My obsessive themes. The subjects.

——*The picturesque?*

BORGES: The *tics,* as Jean Cocteau would say.

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——They tend to reach for the most obvious thing....

BORGES: The same thing happened with the followers of Lugones. On top of that, what happens to them then is that they end up parodying themselves.

——Being their own imitators.

BORGES: Their own parodists, too, since they make no attempt to hide it.

——Your style has been very influential. I think that every Argentine writer after you—even those who write against you—write in a style they learned from you. A style based on contradictions, terse. Because, as you yourself say, at first you did some very "picturesque," local-colourish writing yourself, and then went about replacing things like "sureros y norteros" *by* "propios y forasteros." *Without a redundant word, and very Argentine in the sense of being reticent, of a measured sentimentality.*

BORGES: It's just that I realised that when I wrote something I would not dare repeat it or read it out loud. Because of those words. Then I realised I couldn't write that way.

——In a sonnet of yours on Emerson you seem to perceive him as a man who was unable to communicate, because at the end you make him say: "I have not lived, I want to be someone else."

BORGES: I was thinking of a poem of Emerson's called *Days*, in which he says that the days filed before him like veiled women, offering him everything, offering him the universe, and he merely accepted a few herbs and a drop of water, and then the days were gone and he saw the light. It bears a relationship with a poem by Yeats on the same subject; that is, he feels sorry for having lived so little and for having contented himself with so few experiences and with so much literature.

——Is this the opposition between life and literature? But then so many deny any such opposition and hold that life is one with art.

BORGES: In general, I don't think we should suppose that reality and literature are so very far apart. I was asked recently "whether the poet should fulfil his duty towards reality." And I answered that, unfortunately, the poet himself is also real and therefore the poet's dreams and fancies are also part of reality. An example, perhaps a trifle too obvious, is a book I've read and re-read, time and again: Flaubert's *Salammbô*. I think Flaubert gave it the subtitle "a novel of Carthage." He went to Carthage, became well acquainted with his subject, read all the possible books on it, had a polemic with the German scholar Frehner—which he won—and wrote that justly famous book. Still, that novel which deals with events during the Punic Wars in Carthage, and whose characters are Carthaginians, is a book which could only have been written in 19th-century France; it forms part of the reality of that age and that national culture. So I don't think the poet should try to be realistic or try to avoid it; whether we like it or not we are immersed (the word is rather clumsy, but I can't find another one right now) in reality; we are a part of reality and can't leave off being real and contemporary. The fact that we belong to one century or another makes no difference. So, for example, in order to imagine the experiences of a murderer, let us say—what does it feel like to commit a murder?—Dostoevsky imagines a book called *Crime and Punishment*, a realistic novel, or a novel of realistic appearance; while Shakespeare imagines or re-creates the story of Macbeth and the three witches or fates. Both means are equally valid. I think both writers managed to enter into the conscience of a murderer: one of them by imagining the murderer as a contemporary, the other by taking a story belonging to the chronicles of Scotland. In other words, the symbols we use are of very little importance. What is important is that the symbols be charged with emotion, and that the reader collaborate with the writer by charging them with his own emotions as well.

——What are you working on now?

BORGES: I'm thinking of writing some stories. I'll see if I can write a few more like *The Intruder*, stories about hoodlums.

——Then you're serious about your idea of writing realistic stories?

BORGES: I wrote *The Intruder* because I was thinking of Kipling's first stories; not of his last ones, which are very complex and which go further than my own possibilities. I was thinking of Kipling's first stories, which he wrote when he was in his twenties. I thought: if I could take subjects from our country and treat them like this, I could write some stories of four or five pages in length. And then I also thought of Maupassant and re-read some of his stories. So I'm going to try to do something along these lines. I mean as far as style is concerned, not subject-matter.

——Which is going to be local.

BORGES: Kipling spoke of India, and Maupassant of Normandy and Paris. My stories about Palermo and Turdera aren't going to seem like much, are they?

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Jorge Luis Borges

The Intruder

"... passing the love of women."
2 SAMUEL 1:26

THEY CLAIM (improbably) that the story was told by Eduardo, the younger of the Nilsen brothers, at the wake for Cristian, the elder, who died of natural causes at some point in the 1890s, in the district of Morón. Someone must certainly have heard it from someone else, in the course of that long, idle night, between servings of *maté*, and passed it on to Santiago Dabove, from whom I learned it. Years later, they told it to me again in Turdera, where it had all happened. The second version, considerably more detailed, substantiated Santiago's, with the usual small variations and departures. I write it down now because, if I am not wrong, it reflects briefly and tragically the whole temper of life in those days along the banks of the River Plate. I shall put it down scrupulously; but already I see myself yielding to the writer's temptation to heighten or amplify some detail or other.

In Turdera, they were referred to as the Nilsens. The parish priest told me that his predecessor remembered with some astonishment seeing in that house a worn Bible, bound in black, with Gothic characters; in the end pages, he glimpsed handwritten names and dates. It was the only book in the house. The recorded misfortunes of the Nilsens, lost as all will be lost. The old house, now no longer in existence, was built of unstuccoed brick; beyond the hallway, one could make out a patio of coloured tile, and another with an earth floor. In any case, very few ever went there; the Nilsens were jealous of their privacy. In the dilapidated rooms, they slept on camp beds; their indulgences were horses, riding gear, short-bladed daggers, a substantial fling on Saturdays, and belligerent drinking. I know that they were tall, with red hair which they wore long. Denmark, Ireland, places they would never hear tell of, stirred in the blood of those two *criollos*. The neighbourhood feared them, as they did all red-haired people; nor is it impossible that they might have been responsible for someone's death. Once, shoulder to shoulder, they tangled with the police. The younger one was said to have had an altercation with Juan Iberra in which he did not come off worst; which, according to what we hear, is indeed something. They were cowboys, team drivers, rustlers and, at times, cheats. They had a reputation for meanness, except when drinking and gambling made them expansive. Of their ancestry or where they came from, nothing was known. They owned a wagon and a yoke of oxen.

Physically, they were quite distinct from the roughneck crowd of settlers who lent the Costa Brava their own bad name. This, and other things we do not know, helps to explain how close they were; to cross one of them meant having two enemies.

The Nilsens were roisterers, but their amorous escapades had until then been confined to hallways and houses of ill fame. Hence, there was no lack of local comment when Cristian brought Juliana Burgos to live with him. True enough, in that way he got himself a servant; but it is also true that he

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showered her with gaudy trinkets, and showed her off at fiestas—the poor tenement fiestas, where the more intimate figures of the tango were forbidden and where the dancers still kept a respectable space between them. Juliana was dark-complexioned, with large wide eyes; one had only to look at her to make her smile. In a poor neighbourhood, where work and neglect wear out the women, she was not at all bad-looking.

At first, Eduardo went about with them. Later, he took a journey to Arrecifes on some business or other; he brought back home with him a girl he had picked up along the way. After a few days, he threw her out. He grew more sullen; he would get drunk alone at the local bar, and would have nothing to do with anyone. He was in love with Cristian's woman. The neighbourhood, aware of it possibly before he was, looked forward with malicious glee to the subterranean rivalry between the brothers.

One night, when he came back late from the bar at the corner, Eduardo saw Cristian's black horse tethered to the fence. In the patio, the elder brother was waiting for him, all dressed up. The woman came and went, carrying *maté*. Cristian said to Eduardo:

"I'm off to a brawl at the Farías'. There's Juliana for you. If you want her, make use of her."

His tone was half-commanding, half-cordial. Eduardo kept still, gazing at him; he did not know what to do. Cristian rose, said goodbye to Eduardo but not to Juliana, who was an object to him, mounted, and trotted off, casually.

FROM THAT NIGHT ON, they shared her. No one knew the details of that sordid conjunction, which outraged the proprieties of the poor locality. The arrangement worked well for some weeks, but it could not last. Between them, the brothers never uttered the name of Juliana, not even to summon her, but they sought out and found reasons for disagreeing. They argued over the sale of some skins, but they were really arguing about something else. Cristian would habitually raise his voice, while Eduardo kept quiet. Without realising it, they were growing jealous. In that rough settlement, no man ever let on to others, or to himself, that a woman would matter, except as something desired or possessed, but the two of them were in love. For them, that in its way was a humiliation.

ONE AFTERNOON, in the Plaza de Lomos, Eduardo ran into Juan Iberra, who congratulated him on the beautiful "dish" he had fixed up for himself. It was then, I think, that Eduardo roughed him up. No one, in his presence, was going to make fun of Cristian.

The woman waited on the two of them with animal submissiveness; but she could not conceal her preference, unquestionably for the younger one, who, although he had not rejected the arrangement, had not sought it out.

One day, they told Juliana to get two chairs from the first patio, and to keep out of the way, for they had to talk. Expecting a long discussion, she lay down for her siesta, but soon they summoned her. They had her pack a bag with all she possessed, not forgetting the glass rosary and the little crucifix her mother had left her. Without any explanation, they put her on the wagon, and set out on a wordless and wearisome journey. It had rained; the roads were heavy going and it was eleven in the evening when they arrived at Morón. There they passed her over to the *patrona* of the house of prostitution. The deal had already been made; Cristian picked up the money, and later on he divided it with Eduardo.

In Turdera, the Nilsens, floundering in the meshes of that outrageous love (which was also something of a routine), sought to recover their old ways, of men among men. They went back to their poker games, to fighting, to occasional binges. At times, perhaps, they felt themselves liberated, but one or other of them would quite often be away, perhaps genuinely, perhaps not. A little before the end of the year, the younger one announced that he had business in

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Buenos Aires. Cristian went to Morón; in the yard of the house we already know, he recognised Eduardo's piebald. He entered; the other was inside, waiting his turn. It seems that Christian said to him:

"If we go on like this, we'll wear out the horses. It's better that we do something about her."

He spoke with the *patrona*, took some coins from his money belt, and they went off with her. Juliana went with Cristian; Eduardo spurred his horse so as not to see them.

They returned to what has already been told. The cruel solution had failed; both had given in to the temptation to dissimulate. Cain's mark was there, but the bond between the Nilsens was strong—who knows what trials and dangers they had shared—and they preferred to vent their furies on others. On a stranger, on the dogs, on Juliana, who had brought discord into their lives.

March was almost over and the heat did not break. One Sunday (on Sundays it is the custom to retire early), Eduardo, coming back from the corner bar, saw Christian yoking up the oxen. Cristian said to him:

"Come on. We have to leave some hides off at the Pardo's. I've already loaded them. Let us take advantage of the cool."

The Pardo place lay, I think, to the south of them; they took the Camino de las Tropas, and then a detour. The landscape was spreading out slowly under the night.

They skirted a clump of dry reeds. Cristian threw away the cigarette he had lit and said casually:

"Now, brother, to work. Later on, the buzzards will give us a hand. Today I killed her. Let her stay here with all her finery, and not do us any more harm."

They embraced, almost in tears. Now they shared an extra bond; the woman sorrowfully sacrificed and the obligation to forget her.

Translated by Alastair Reid

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Jorge Luis Borges

The Mythical Founding of Buenos Aires

And was it along this torpid muddy river
that the prows came to found my native city?
The little painted boats must have suffered the steep surf
among the root-clumps of the horse-brown current.

Pondering well, let us suppose that the river
was blue then like an extension of the sky,
with a small red star inset to mark the spot
where Juan Díaz fasted and the Indians dined.

But for sure a thousand men and other thousands
arrived across a sea that was five moons wide,
still infested with mermaids and sea serpents
and magnetic boulders which sent the compass wild.

On the coast they put up a few ramshackle huts
and slept uneasily. This, they claim, in the Riachuelo,
but that is a story dreamed up in the Boca.
It was really a city block in my district: Palermo.

A whole square block, but set down in open country,
attended by dawns and rains and hard southeasters,
identical to that block which still stands in my neighbourhood:
Guatemala—Serrano—Paraguay—Gurruchaga.

A general store pink as the back of a playing card
shone bright; in the back there was poker talk.
The corner bar flowered into life as a local bully,
already cock of his walk, resentful, tough.

The first barrel organ teetered over the horizon
with its clumsy progress, its *habaneras*, its wop.
The cart-shed wall was unanimous for YRIGOYEN.
Some piano was banging out tangos by Saborido.

A cigar store perfumed the desert like a rose.
The afternoon had established its yesterdays,
and men took on together an illusory past.
Only one thing was missing—the street had no other side.

Hard to believe Buenos Aires had any beginning.
I feel it to be as eternal as air and water.

translated by Alastair Reid

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Deathwatch on the South-side

By reason of someone's death—
a mystery whose empty name I know and whose reality is beyond us—
a house on the South-side stands open until dawn,
unfamiliar to me, and not to be seen again,
but waiting for me this night
with a wakeful light in the deep hours of sleep—
a house wasted away by bad nights and worn sharp
into a fineness of reality.

Toward its weighty deathwatch I make my way
through streets elementary as memories,
through time grown pure in plenitude of night,
with no more life to be heard
than neighbourhood loiterers make near a corner store
and a whistler somewhere, lonely in the nightworld.

In my slow walk, in my expectancy,
I reach the block, the house, the plain door I am looking for,
where men constrained to gravity receive me,
men who had a part in my elders' years,
and we size up our destinies in a tidied room overlooking the yard,
a yard that is under the power and wholeness of night:
and we speak of indifferent things, reality here being greater,
and in the mirror we are Argentine, apathetic,
and the shared *maté* measures out useless hours.

I am touched by the frail wisdoms
lost in every man's death—
his habit of books, of a key, of one body
among the others—
irrecoverable rhythms that were
the order and friendliness of the world for him.
I know that every privilege, however obscure, is in the line of miracles,
and here is a great one: to take part in this vigil,
gathered around a being no one knows: the Dead;
gathered to set him apart or guard him, his first night in death.

(Faces grow haggard with watching:
our eyes are dying on the height like Jesus.)

And the dead man, the unbelievable?
His reality remains under the alien reality of flowers,
and his hospitality in death will give us
one memory more for time,
and graven streets on the South-side, one by one to be savoured,
and a dark breeze in my face as I walk home,
and night that frees us from that ordeal by weariness,
the daily round of the real.

translated by Robert Fitzgerald

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Deaths of Buenos Aires

I La Chacarita

When the South-side's graveyards,
crammed full of yellow fever, cried out of their depths: *Enough!*
when the South-side's clustering tenements
spread death on the face of the city
until Buenos Aires could look at the carnage no longer,
shovel by shovel, they opened you up
on the city's verge where the west drops away—
behind dust storms
and a weight of primordial muck left behind for the teamsters.
There was only the world
with its habit of stars rising over a handful of farms,
and trains leaving their sheds in Bermejo
with the gone-and-forgotten:
dead eyes of men keeping watch in unshaven dishevelment,
dead girls, despoiled and unbeautiful flesh, without magic.

The frauds of mortality—stained as in childbirth—
still fatten your subsoil; so you muster up souls
for your compounds, for your hidden contingent of bones
dropped into holes or buried away in your night
as if drowned in the depths of a sea.

A hard vegetation, purgatorial rubbish
inured to damnation,
batters your long line of walls
as though nothing were sure but corruption; a slum
hurls its fiery life at your feet
in gutters shot through with a low flame of mud,
or stands, dazed and unwilling, in the sound of accordions
or the bleating of carnival horns.

(The destiny given me now, the judgment that nothing
can alter, I heard on that night, in your night,
when the guitar and the words joined under the hands
of the player—one of the dispossessed poor who lives out his life
on the fringes—and the two sang as one:
Death is life lived away,
life is death coming on.)

Cremator of all and mimic of graveyards,
La Quema summons that garbage of death to sit at your feet, a passing intruder.
We exhaust and infect all reality: 210 cartloads a day
to outrage the mornings, on their way
to this smoking necropolis
with a waste of quotidian things we have fouled with mortality.
Funeral coaches with their nondescript cupolas of wood, and raised crosses
move through your streets—black pawns on an ultimate
chessboard—whose festering pomp covers over
the shame of our dying.
In the tidy enclaves
of your graveyards, death keeps colourless, void, and statistical,
subsides into birth dates and family names,
the dying away of the word.

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Chacarita:
sink of a nation, Buenos Aires sloping away to the end,
barrio outliving all others, or outdying them,
pesthouse of our death, not of a life yet to come,
I have heard all your doddering words and believe none of them;
your insistence on tragedy is enough to confirm all our living,
and one rose in its bounty exceeds all your marble.

II La Recoleta

Death is scrupulous here; here, in this city of ports,
death is circumspect:
a blood-kinship of enduring and provident light
reaching out from the courts of the *Socorro*,
from the ash burnt to bits in the braziers,
to the sugar-and-milk of a holiday treat
and a depth of patios like a dynasty.
Old sweetnesses, old rigours meet
and are one in the graveyards of *La Recoleta*.

At your summit, the portico's bravery,
a tree's blind solicitude,
birds prattling of death without ever suspecting it,
a ruffle of drums from the veterans' burial plot
to hearten the bypasser;
at your shoulder, hidden away, the tenements of the North-side,
the walls of the executioner, Rosas.
Here a nation of unrepresentable dead
thrives on decay under a suffrage of marble,
since the day that the earliest seed in your garden, destined for heaven,
Uruguay's child,
María de los Dolores Maciel, dropped off to sleep—
the least of your buried—in your waste desolation.

Here something holds me: I think
of the fatuous flowers that speak out so piously now in your name—
the leaf-yellow clay under the fringe of acacia,
memorial wreaths lifted up in your family crypts—
why do they stay here, in their sleepy and delicate way,
side by side with the terrible keepsakes of those whom we loved?

I put the hard question and venture an answer:
our flowers keep perpetual watch on the dead
because we all incomprehensibly know
that their sleepy and delicate presence
is all we can offer the dead to take with them in their dying,
without giving offence through the pride of our living
or seeming more alive than the dead.

translated by Ben Belitt

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On Translating with Borges

BORGES HAS on several occasions given a detailed picture of his collaboration in the writing of stories and essays with Bioy Casares and others. In a casual atmosphere, in a spirit of friendliness (or more often friendship), the collaborators shed the strait-jacket of their narrow selves and plunge directly into the task at hand, each free to criticise and be criticised without concern for puffing up or deflating egos or trampling feelings. All that matters in the end is the mutual effort. The same holds true for collaborating with Borges, as I have experienced it, in the translation of his own work. What is amazing is not that Borges threw himself into our project as into a new creative work, but that his attention was always focused on the quality of the verse as it developed in English and never on any jealous preservation of the Spanish lines or wording. In fact, so far were we from treating the Spanish originals as sacred text, that Borges many times referred to his poems as "mere rough drafts" for the English versions. When clarity was needed, Borges shed light. When flexibility was called for (in the demands of English metre), Borges re-wrote. Where amplification seemed necessary, Borges opened up. And, in his characteristic playful manner, he even said that when writing to the poet-translators I should "tell them that despite my poems the translations must be good." This youthful style, this generosity, was possible because of Borges' easy and wide command of English. It was also possible because Borges is Borges: open, original, approachable, unacademic, unpretentious, informal, and only eccentrically self-centred. Working with Borges, then, was and is an undiminished pleasure.

OUR COLLABORATION in the translations continued from early December 1967, when we first met, until Borges' departure from Cambridge in mid-April last year. In the beginning we saw each other once or twice weekly for long sessions, and towards the end, during the last month, we got together nearly every day.

The choice of poems was worked out jointly. While I went about selecting poets and commissioning translations, a method began to evolve. The method was based on two factors: the difficulty of the poem and the translator's familiarity with Spanish. First of all, on my own, I studied each poem. For most of these I wrote out literal versions which I took to Borges and —because of the degree of his blindness—read to him: a line or two of Spanish at a time, followed by an English equivalent for literal sense. Sometimes we wrote out transliterations together on the spot, and finally we had one prepared for every poem in our selection. On the sheets of these rough versions I jotted down whatever comment Borges made about the poem, spontaneous or deliberate, made a note of any additional biographical or historical background that came up in our talks, and was always on the look-out for particulars about local atmosphere. Anything, in short, that I might pass on to the prospective translator in hopes of lightening his task or improving the quality of the translation or of doing both. It was here and in this way that I tried to anticipate the translator's problems and his possible questions, and so solve them for him in advance. For example, I always made a point of telling a translator ahead of time which sense of *sueño* Borges intended in any given instance —"sleep" or "dream." Because of the almost automatic connection between Borges and dreams, the unguided translator unfailingly plumps for "dream," yet in most cases the author's intention is "sleep." There were also cases of Borges' personal usage: the word *tarde* is rarely "afternoon" and usually "evening."

POETS WHOSE KNOWLEDGE of Spanish was little, or rusty, or non-existent, received line for line and word for word transliterations together with any other aids that I could give them, such as notes, suggestions, or sources. Those with a superior knowledge of Spanish usually got no literal versions but all the other help. However, where passages were exceptionally difficult (as in so much of Borges' early poetry) these hard lines might be spelled out word by word. Some of the poems were not only very difficult but they were also so local in topic that on two occasions Alastair Reid, whose Spanish is superb, agreed to make translations only if I would provide the literal version worked out with Borges, plus whatever notes we could supply. (One result of this is Reid's brilliant translation of "The Mythical Founding of Buenos Aires," a poem so compounded of local references and jokes—the whole poem is a joke—that at the same time as we placed the raw material into the translator's hands, Borges and I tried to dissuade him from even attempting the task.) The degree of collaboration between Borges, editor, and each poet varied widely from poem to poem. Some pieces—especially Borges' later work, either on universal themes or else on subjects with which the translator felt at home—were brought into English with

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hardly any help from Borges and me. (But of course the literal version was always there in my hand as a check.) Many times—again this depended on the difficulty or obscurity of the text—several drafts went back and forth between poet and editor before a satisfactory version was reached. Usually I did not consult Borges during these intermediate stages, not until my own critical resources were exhausted. When at last I read him a draft it was either finished or close to being finished. Borges always listened eagerly, even happily, and was quick to break in with his generous comments: "But this is good. . . ." or "But this is far better than the original. . . ." Sometimes he would leap up to announce to his wife in the next room: "Elsa, di Giovanni has just read me the most wonderful translation."

Frequently, of course, the work sessions broke down when Borges would interrupt with a recitation from Kipling or William Morris or Robert Frost, personal reminiscences, thunderous lines of Anglo-Saxon, a brief biography of Snorri Sturluson, a run-down of the members of the Argentine Academy, the plot of a story he wanted to write, an analysis of unprintable Buenos Aires slang.

IT SHOULD BE obvious by now that Borges and I enjoyed our work together and that our enthusiasm went beyond the professional. The translators, too, seemed to catch our spirit and in many cases redoubled it, adding pleasure on pleasure. But the point is, what in the end did we achieve?

Two clear examples are to be found in comparisons of Alastair Reid's "A Page to Commemorate Colonel Suárez, Victor at Junín" and Robert Fitzgerald's "Deathwatch on the Southside," with earlier published versions of these poems made by the same translators. By supplying Reid with certain biographical, geographical, and historical details, he was able to re-focus the central elements of the poem and to make its sources in rich and remote South American politics clear. In the poem, Colonel Suárez, though an Argentine officer, was not living in his own land in alienation (as in Reid's first version) but was in exile in Uruguay; hence it was not luck but fate that took him there. In exile time did not flow for him but was a monotony. And the battle itself: it occurred in the Andes, on a tableland in Peru, a place not to be confused with the Argentine town named for it at a later date. These were the Wars of Independence and Suárez was leading Peruvian troops, not fighting against them. In one line, Borges writes simply of the *laberinto de los ejércitos*—"labyrinth of the armies"—taking it for granted that his readers already know that the engagement, so famous in South American history, was fought entirely between cavalries. But no poet writing in English would be expected to be aware of that from Borges' Spanish. It is not surprising, then, that Reid's earlier version reads "foot soldiers" and his later one has it "cavalries." Reid's imagination went to work on the clarified background and thanks to his gifts, not to mention his forbearance, the new poem gains in strength and vividness.

ROBERT FITZGERALD was invited to revise "Deathwatch" (in its earlier life called "The Night They Kept Vigil in the South") to conform with Borges' own numerous minor revisions in the Spanish text. At the same time, with the author himself available, it seemed a good idea to try to clear up several vague or obscure points, marks of Borges' early style. To begin with, the *Sur* in the title meant specifically the South-side of Buenos Aires and did not refer to the south of Argentina or stand for some abstract symbolic South. But what did Borges mean by *el tiempo abundante de la noche*? This was found out, passed on to Fitzgerald, and eventually the earlier "the abundant night-time" was transformed into "time grown pure in plenitude of night." Similarly, Borges' very difficult and subjective *y algún silbido solo en el mundo* went from "a whistle alone in the world" to "and a whistler somewhere, lonely in the nightworld." Elsewhere, attending to the smallest details, Borges suggested that the word *patio,* which occurs frequently in the poem, not be rendered as "courtyard." To Borges that word suggested something far more magnificent than the humble patio he remembered from forty years ago. Fitzgerald's simple and effective solution was "yard." But it is in the almost impenetrable density of the poem's last eight lines that Fitzgerald crowned his achievement. Exactly what was meant by *sentenciosas calles del Sur*? Borges saw at once that he had not really made his intention clear here and so began expanding on the text, giving me material for notes to send the translator. It seemed that the author meant "sententious" in a purely physical and descriptive sense. There was a terse and concise quality about the streets, and to describe them a word was required that would give the idea of long vistas and straight lines, of an unending sweep of the eye. Taking characteristic pains and working the poem through several drafts, Fitzgerald's earlier lines,

and sententious and slowly-to-be-merited streets
of the South,
the dark breeze across the forehead that turns
back,

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now became:

and graven streets on the South-side, one by one to be savoured,
and a dark breeze in my face as I walk home.

My own translation of "Conjectural Poem" started out as an attempt to correct the errors and to relieve the literalness in two previous English versions of what is considered Borges' finest poem. One of these earlier translations had mysteriously dropped a line, and the other contained at least one disastrous error of meaning. But worst of all was their diction: both gave "The lateral night" for the beginning of Borges' line *La noche lateral de los pantanos* (what in the world is a lateral night?), and one rendered the simple Spanish word for knife as "poniard blade." Once I got beyond that stage of my translation, I felt myself already half-way into Laprida's hunted skin and I just kept on in pursuit of physical sensations—from those cinders hailing down on the wind at the outset to the taste of metal at the end. Along the way I got Borges to amplify the term *montoneros*—gaucho militiamen—and I scoured Dante for the reference to the *Purgatorio*, finding that Borges' fourteenth line is a direct translation from the Italian. But when I put the question of "lateral night" to Borges, he astonished me. He said he no longer knew exactly what it meant. No pompous explanation, no defence, just that plain admission. Then telling me to seek some satisfactory solution of my own, he went on to set that particular scene for me as he himself conceived it from the contemporary reports he had read. Laprida had been overtaken on a kind of roadway, perhaps an embankment road, that cut through the marshland. It seemed to me, then, that Laprida would have felt the night pressing in from the swamps on either hand. Yes, said Borges, that was it; and there I had the kernel of my English line. There is one more anecdote worth relating here, and it is concerned with the translation of Borges' half line *se ciernen sobre mi . . .*, which occurs in the poem's last section. As I was about to read my version of this to Borges one afternoon, he interrupted to say that I ought to know that he had thought out that part of the line in English and then translated it into Spanish. His English phrase was "loom over me." I then read him my translation, "tighten the ring around me," which impressed him favourably and which he quickly pronounced better than his own. Whether it really is or not, I was glad Borges said that because the example of his open-mindedness and generosity sent me back to my translation determined to make it better. I began again at the start, wanting now to work it out in a metrical form. Unrhymed Spanish eleven-syllable lines in most cases can be turned into good English blank verse. But in this poem pentameter seemed too rigid, so I shifted instead to a syllabic metre and shaped each line into ten syllables—a fitting solution, I think, since it allows freedom from measured stresses while still imposing on the lines a subtle restraint.

The making of Ben Belitt's translation "Deaths of Buenos Aires," one of Borges' longest poems and also his most difficult, exacted the heaviest demands on the resources and application of the three collaborators. At the outset there seemed hardly a dozen lines in the poem that did not require the fullest explanation and note-gathering. Borges himself chafed and mocked at his overly complicated and unnecessarily arduous early style. In one place he no longer recalled what the word *trapacerías* meant and sent me to the dictionary.

"This is irresponsible," he said. "Why can't a young poet's language be simple and straightforward? Why does it have to be fancy, unusual?"

When at last I wrote Belitt about the poem, I sent him two packed pages of notations. These included everything from pointing out the distinguishing features of the two cemeteries (Chacarita: cheap; Recoleta: dignified) down to the meaning of unusual words like *trapacerías* and *estrafalarias*. *La Quema* was not a symbolic Flame but the name of the municipal incinerator. *Suburbio* was not what we mean by suburb but was the slum at the city's edge. And so on. Then Belitt, who found the poem to his taste and a true challenge, took over. His first draft was remarkably good; it was exciting and had set the proper tone. And yet I was to send him four pages of queries and criticisms (and praise), line by line. We set local geography straight, clarified images, and sought always greater precision in word choice. "The tenements deep in the south" (first draft) became "the South-side's clustering tenements." Even punctuation was argued and defended back and forth through a long series of letters. A complete second draft invited more quibbles, produced more criticism. Finally, I read the poem to Borges, who felt as I did that it was a tremendous job. "Thanks for the joint blessings," wrote Belitt; "I was just about to throw in my sweaty old towel." There was a last flurry and round of tinkering. It had taken three months to bring the poem to this final stage, but it was worth every minute. Belitt has produced a poem of undiminished power, and I think he has given us a masterpiece of translation.

Norman Thomas di Giovanni

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Jorge Luis Borges

The Cyclical Night

They knew it, the fervent pupils of Pythagoras:
That stars and men revolve in a cycle,
That fateful atoms will bring back the vital
Gold Aphrodite, Thebans and agoras.

In future epochs the centaur will oppress
With solid uncleft hoof the breast of the Lapith;
When Rome is dust the Minotaur will moan
Once more in the endless dark of its rank palace.

Every sleepless night will come back in minute
Detail. This writing hand will be born from the same
Womb, and bitter armies contrive their doom.
(Edinburgh's David Hume made this very point.)

I do not know if we will recur in a second
Cycle, like numbers in a periodic fraction;
But I know that a vague Pythagorean rotation
Night after night sets me down in the world

On the outskirts of this city. A remote street
Which might be either north or west or south,
But always with a blue-washed wall, the shade
Of a fig tree, and a sidewalk of broken concrete.

This, here, is Buenos Aires. Time, which brings
Either love or money to men, hands on to me
Only this withered rose, this empty tracery
Of streets with names recurring from the past

In my blood: Laprida, Cabrera, Soler, Suárez . . .
Names in which secret bugle calls are sounding,
Invoking republics, cavalry and mornings,
Joyful victories, men dying in action.

Squares weighed down by a night in no one's care
Are the vast patios of an empty palace,
And the single-minded streets creating space
Are corridors for sleep and nameless fear.

It returns, the hollow dark of Anaxagoras;
In my human flesh, eternity keeps recurring
And the memory, or plan, of an endless poem beginning:
"They knew it, the fervent pupils of Pythagoras . . . "

translated by Alastair Reid

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Conjectural Poem

Doctor Francisco Laprida, set upon and killed 22 September 1829 by a band of gaucho militia serving under Aldao, reflects before he dies:

Bullets whip the air this last afternoon.
A wind is up, blowing full of cinders
as the day and this chaotic battle
straggle to a close. The gauchos have won:
victory is theirs, the barbarians'.
I, Francisco Narciso de Laprida,
who studied both canon law and civil
and whose voice declared the independence
of this entire untamed territory,
in defeat, my face marked by blood and sweat,
holding neither hope nor fear, the way lost,
strike out for the South through the back country.

Like that captain in *Purgatorio*
who fleeing on foot left blood on the plain
and was blinded and then trampled by death
where an obscure river loses its name,
so too will I fall. Today is the end.
The night and to right and left the marshes—
in ambush, clogging my steps. I hear the
hooves of my own hot death riding me down
with horsemen, frothing muzzles, and lances.

I who longed to be someone else, to weigh
judgments, to read books, to hand down the law,
will lie in the open out in these swamps;
but a secret joy somehow swells my breast.
I see at last that I am face to face
with my South American destiny.
I was carried to this ruinous hour
by the intricate labyrinth of steps
woven by my days from a day that goes
back to my birth. At last I've discovered
the mysterious key to all my years,
the fate of Francisco de Laprida,
the missing letter, the perfect pattern
that was known to God from the beginning.
In this night's mirror I can comprehend
my unsuspected true face. The circle's
about to close. I wait to let it come.

My feet tread the shadows of the lances
that spar for the kill. The taunts of my death,
the horses, the horsemen, the horses' manes,
tighten the ring around me. . . . Now the first
blow, the lance's hard steel ripping my chest,
and across my throat the intimate knife.

translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni

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A Page to Commemorate Colonel Suárez, Victor at Junín

What do they matter now, the deprivations,
exile, the ignominies of growing old,
the dictator's shadow spreading across the land, the house
in the Barrio del Alto, which his brothers sold while he fought,
the pointless days (days one hopes to forget,
days one knows are forgettable),
when he had at least his burning hour on horseback
on the plateau of Junín, a stage for the future,
as if that mountain stage itself were the future?

What is time's monotony to him, who knew
that fulfilment, that ecstasy, that afternoon?

Thirteen years he served in the Wars of Independence. Then
fate took him to Uruguay, to the banks of the Rio Negro.
In the dying afternoons he would think
of his moment which had flowered like a rose—
the crimson battle of Junín, the enduring moment
in which the lances crossed, the order of battle,
defeat at first, and in the uproar
(as astonishing to him as to the army)
his voice urging the Peruvians to the attack,
the thrill, the drive, the decisiveness of the charge,
the seething labyrinth of cavalries,
clash of the lances (not a single shot fired),
the Spaniard he ran through with his spear,
the headiness of victory, the exhaustion, the drowsiness descending,
and the men dying in the marshes,
and Bolívar uttering words earmarked no doubt for history,
and the sun in the west by now, and water and wine
tasted as for the first time, and that dead man
whose face the battle had trampled on and obliterated. . . .

His great-grandson is writing these lines,
and a silent voice comes to him out of the past,
out of the blood:

"What does my battle at Junín matter if it is only
a glorious memory, or a date learned by rote
for an examination, or a place in the atlas?
The battle is everlasting and can do without
the pomp of actual armies and of trumpets.
Junín is two civilians cursing a tyrant
on a street corner,
or an unknown man somewhere, dying in prison."

translated by Alastair Reid

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The Dagger

A dagger rests in a drawer.
It was forged in Toledo at the end of the last century. Luis Melián Lafinur gave it to my father, who brought it from Uruguay. Evaristo Carriego once held it in his hand.
Whoever lays eyes on it has to pick up the dagger and toy with it, as if he had always been on the lookout for it. The hand is quick to grip the waiting hilt, and the powerful obeying blade slides in and out of the sheath with a click.
This is not what the dagger wants.
It is more than a structure of metal; men conceived it and shaped it with a single end in mind. The dagger that last night knifed a man in Tacuarembó and the daggers that rained on Caesar are in some eternal way the same dagger. The dagger wants to kill, it wants to shed sudden blood.
In a drawer of my writing table, among draft pages and old letters, the dagger dreams over and over its simple tiger's dream. On wielding it the hand comes alive because the metal comes alive, sensing itself, each time handled, in touch with the killer for whom it was forged.
At times I am sorry for it. Such power and singlemindedness, so impassive or innocent its pride, and the years slip by, unheeding.

**translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni*

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The Other Tiger

And the craft that createth a semblance
MORRIS: SIGURD THE VOLSUNG (1876)

A tiger comes to mind. The twilight here
Exalts the vast and busy Library
And seems to set the bookshelves back in gloom;
Innocent, ruthless, bloodstained, sleek,
It wanders through its forest and its day
Printing a track along the muddy banks
Of sluggish streams whose names it does not know
(In its world there are no names or past
Or time to come, only the vivid now)
And makes its way across wild distances
Sniffing the braided labyrinth of smells
And in the wind picking the smell of dawn
And tantalising scent of grazing deer;
Among the bamboo's slanting stripes I glimpse
The tiger's stripes and sense the bony frame
Under the splendid quivering cover of skin.
Curving oceans and the planet's wastes keep us
Apart in vain; from here in a house far off
In South America I dream of you,
Track you, O tiger of the Ganges' banks.

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It strikes me now as evening fills my soul
That the tiger addressed in my poem
Is a shadowy beast, a tiger of symbols
And scraps picked up at random out of books,
A string of laboured tropes that have no life,
And not the fated tiger, the deadly jewel
That under sun or stars or changing moon
Goes on in Bengal or Sumatra fulfilling
Its rounds of love and indolence and death.
To the tiger of symbols I hold opposed
The one that's real, the one whose blood runs hot
As it cuts down a herd of buffaloes,
And that today, this August third, nineteen
Fifty-nine, throws its shadow on the grass;
But by the act of giving it a name,
By trying to fix the limits of its world,
It becomes a fiction, not a living beast,
Not a tiger out roaming the wilds of earth.

We'll hunt for a third tiger now, but like
The others this one too will be a form
Of what I dream, a structure of words, and not
The flesh and bone tiger that beyond all myths
Paces the earth. I know these things quite well,
Yet nonetheless some force keeps driving me
In this vague, unreasonable, and ancient quest,
And I go on pursuing through the hours
Another tiger, the beast not found in verse.

translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni

Embarking on the Study of Anglo-Saxon Grammar

After some fifty generations
(Such gulfs are opened to us all by time)
I come back on the far shore of a vast river
Never reached by the Norsemen's long ships
To the harsh and work-wrought words
Which, with a tongue now dust,
I used in the days of Northumbria and Mercia
Before becoming Haslam or Borges.
Last Saturday we read how Julius Caesar
Was the first who came from Romeburh to seek out Britain;
Before the grapes grow back I shall have listened to
The nightingale of the riddle
And the elegy intoned by the twelve warriors
Round the burial mound of their king.
To me these words seem
Symbols of other symbols, variants
On the English or the German (their descendants),
Yet at some point in time they were fresh images
And a man used them to invoke the sea or a sword.
Tomorrow they will come alive again;
Tomorrow *fyr* will not become *fire* but rather
Some vestige of a changeable tamed god
Whom no one can confront without feeling an ancient fear.

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All praise to the inexhaustible
Labyrinth of cause and effect
Which, before unveiling to me the mirror
Where I shall see no one or shall see some other self,
Has granted me this perfect contemplation
Of a language at its dawn.

translated by Alastair Reid

Hengest Cyning

THE KING'S EPITAPH

Beneath this stone lies the body of Hengist
Who founded in these islands the first kingdom
Of the royal house of Odin
And glutted the screaming eagle's greed.

THE KING SPEAKS

I know not what runes will be scraped on the stone
But my words are these:
Beneath the heavens I was Hengist the mercenary.
My might and my courage I marketed to kings
Whose lands lay west over the water
Here at the edge of the sea
Called the Spear-Warrior;
But a man's might and his courage can
Not long bear being sold,
And so after cutting down all through the North
The foes of the Briton king,
From him too I took light and life together.
I like this kingdom that I seized with my sword;
It has rivers for the net and the oar
And long seasons of sun
And soil for the plough and for husbandry
And Britons for working the farms
And cities of stone which we shall allow
To crumble to ruin,
Because there dwell the ghosts of the dead.
But behind my back I know
These Britons brand me traitor,
Yet I have been true to my deeds and my daring
And to other men's care never yielded my destiny
And no one dared ever betray me.

translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni

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Camden 1892

The fragrance of coffee and newspapers.
Sunday and its tedium. This morning,
On the uninvestigated page, that vain
Column of allegorical verses
By a happy colleague. The old man lies
Prostrate, pale, even white in his decent
Room, the room of a poor man. Needlessly
He glances at his face in the exhausted
Mirror. He thinks, without surprise now,
That face is me. One fumbling hand touches
The tangled beard, the devastated mouth.
The end is not far off. His voice declares:
I am almost gone. But my verses scan
Life and its splendour. I was Walt Whitman.

translated by Richard Howard and César Rennert

Someone

A man worn down by time,
a man who does not even expect death
(the proofs of death are statistics
and everyone runs the risk
of being the first immortal),
a man who has learned to express thanks
for the days' modest alms:
sleep, routine, the taste of water,
an unsuspected etymology,
a Latin or Saxon verse,
the memory of a woman who left him
thirty years ago now
whom he can call to mind without bitterness,
a man who is aware that the present
is both future and oblivion,
a man who has betrayed
and has been betrayed,
may feel suddenly, when crossing the street,
a mysterious happiness
not coming from the side of hope
but from an ancient innocence,
from his own root or from some diffused god.

He knows better than to look at it closely,
for there are reasons more terrible than tigers
which will prove to him
that wretchedness is his duty,
but he accepts humbly
this felicity, this glimmer.

Perhaps in death when the dust
is dust, we will be forever
this undecipherable root,
from which will grow forever,
serene or horrible,
our solitary heaven or hell.

translated by W. S. Merwin

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Jorge Luis Borges

The Other Death

I HAVE MISLAID the letter, but a couple of years or so ago Gannon wrote me from his ranch up in Gualeguaychú saying he would send me a translation, perhaps the very first into Spanish, of Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "The Past," and adding in a P.S. that Don Pedro Damián, whom I might recall, had died of a lung ailment a few nights earlier. The man (Gannon went on), wasted by fever, had in his delirium relived the long ordeal of the battle of Masoller. It seemed to me there was nothing unreasonable or out of the ordinary about this news since Don Pedro, when he was nineteen or twenty, had been a follower of the banners of Aparicio Saravia. Pedro Damián had been working as a hand up north on a ranch in Río Negro or Paysandú when the 1904 revolution broke out. Although he was from Gualeguaychú, in the province of Entre Ríos, he went along with his friends and, being as cocky and ignorant as they were, joined the rebel army. He fought in one or two skirmishes and in the final battle. Returned home in 1905, Damián, with a kind of humble stubbornness, once more took up his work as a cowhand. For all I know, he never left his native province again. He spent his last thirty years living in a small lonely cabin eight or ten miles from Ñancay. It was in that out-of-the-way place that I spoke with him one evening (that I tried to speak with him one evening) back around 1942; he was a man of few words, and not very bright. Masoller, it turned out, was the whole of his personal history. And so I was not surprised to find out that he had lived the sound and fury of that battle over again at the hour of his death. When I knew I would never see Damián another time, I wanted to remember him, but so poor is my memory for faces that all I could recall was the snapshot Gannon had taken of him. There is nothing unusual in this fact, considering that I saw the man only once, at the beginning of 1942, but had looked at his picture many times. Gannon sent me the photograph and it, too, has been mislaid. I think now that if I were to come across it I would feel afraid.

THE SECOND EPISODE took place in Montevideo, months later. Don Pedro's fever and his agony gave me the idea for a tale of fantasy based on the defeat at Masoller; Emir Rodríguez Monegal, to whom I had told the plot, wrote me an introduction to Colonel Dionisio Tabares, who had fought in that campaign. The Colonel received me one evening after dinner. From a rocking-chair out in the side yard, he recalled the old days with great feeling but at the same time with a faulty sense of chronology. He spoke of ammunition that never reached him and of reserves of horses that arrived worn out, of sleepy dust-covered men weaving labyrinths of marches, of Saravia, who might have ridden into Montevideo but who passed it by "because the gaucho has a fear of towns," of throats hacked from ear to ear, of a civil war that seemed to me less a military operation than the dream of a cattle thief or an outlaw. Names of battles kept coming up: Illescas, Tupambaé, Masoller.

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The Colonel's pauses were so effective and his manner so vivid that I realised he had told and retold these same things many times before, and I feared that behind his words almost no true memories remained. When he stopped for a breath, I managed to get in Damián's name.

"Damián? Pedro Damián?" said the Colonel. "He served with me. A little half-breed. I remember the boys used to call him Daymán—after the river." The Colonel let out a burst of loud laughter, then cut it off all at once. I could not tell whether his discomfort was real or put on.

In another voice, he stated that war, like women, served as a test of men, and that nobody knew who he really was until he had been under fire. A man might think himself a coward and actually be brave. And the other way around, too, as had happened to that poor Damián, who bragged his way in and out of saloons with his white ribbon marking him as a Blanco, and later on lost his nerve at Masoller. In one exchange of gunfire with the regulars, he handled himself like a man, but then it was something else again when the two armies met face to face and the artillery began pounding away and every man felt as though there were five thousand other men out there grouping to kill him. That poor kid. He'd spent his life on a farm dipping sheep, and then all of a sudden he gets himself dragged along and mixed up in the grim reality of war. . . .

FOR SOME ABSURD REASON, Tabares' version of the story made me uncomfortable. I would have preferred things to have happened differently. Without being aware of it, I had made a kind of idol out of old Damián—a man I had seen only once on a single evening many years earlier. Tabares' story destroyed everything. Suddenly the reasons for Damián's aloofness and his stubborn insistence on keeping to himself were clear to me. They had not sprung from modesty but from shame. In vain, I told myself that a man pursued by an act of cowardice is more complex and more interesting than one who is merely courageous. The gaucho Martín Fierro, I thought, is less memorable than Lord Jim or Razumov. Yes, but Damián, as a gaucho, should have been Martín Fierro—especially in the presence of Uruguayan gauchos. In what Tabares left unsaid, I felt his assumption (perhaps undeniable) that Uruguay is more primitive than Argentina and therefore physically braver. I remember we said goodbye to each other that night with a cordiality that was a bit marked.

DURING the winter, the need of one or two details for my story (which somehow was slow in taking shape) sent me back to Colonel Tabares again. I found him with another man of his own age, a Dr. Juan Francisco Amaro from Paysandú, who had also fought in Saravia's revolution. They spoke, naturally, of Masoller.

Amaro told a few anecdotes, then slowly added, in the manner of someone who is thinking aloud, "We camped for the night at Santa Irene, I recall, and some of the men from around there joined us. Among them a French veterinarian, who died the night before the battle, and a boy, a sheepshearer from Entre Ríos. Pedro Damián was his name."

I cut him off sharply. "Yes, I know," I said. "The Argentine who couldn't face the bullets."

I stopped. The two of them were looking at me, puzzled.

"You are mistaken, sir," Amaro said after a while. "Pedro Damián died as any man might wish to die. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. The regular troops had dug themselves in on the top of a hill and our men charged them with lances. Damián rode at the head, shouting, and a bullet struck him in the chest. He stood up in his stirrups, finished his shout, and then rolled to the ground, where he lay under the horses' hooves. He was dead, and the whole last charge of Masoller trampled over him. So fearless, and barely twenty."

He was speaking, doubtless, of another Damián, but something made me ask what it was the boy had shouted.

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"Filth," said the Colonel. "That's what men shout in action."

"Maybe," said Amaro, "but he also cried out, 'Long live Urquiza!' "

We were silent. Finally, the Colonel murmured, "Not as if we were fighting at Masoller, but at Cagancha or India Muerta a hundred years ago." He added, genuinely bewildered, "I commanded those troops, and I could swear it's the first time I've ever heard of this Damián."

We had no luck in getting the Colonel to remember him.

BACK IN BUENOS AIRES, the amazement that his forgetfulness produced in me repeated itself. Browsing through the eleven pleasurable volumes of Emerson's works in the basement of Mitchell's, the English bookstore, I met Patricio Gannon one afternoon. I asked him for his translation of "The Past." He told me that he had no translation of it in mind, and that, besides, Spanish literature was so boring it made Emerson quite superfluous. I reminded him that he had promised me the translation in the same letter in which he wrote me of Damián's death. He asked me who was Damián. I told him in vain. With rising terror, I noticed that he was listening to me very strangely, and I took refuge in a literary discussion on the detractors of Emerson, a poet far more complex, far more skilled, and truly more extraordinary than the unfortunate Poe.

I MUST PUT down some additional facts. In April, I had a letter from Colonel Dionisio Tabares; his mind was no longer vague and now he remembered quite well the boy from Entre Ríos who spearheaded the charge at Masoller and whom his men buried that night in a grave at the foot of the hill. In July, I passed through Gualeguaychú; I did not come across Damián's cabin, and nobody there seemed to remember him now. I wanted to question the foreman Diego Abaroa, who saw Damián die, but Abaroa had passed away himself at the beginning of the winter. I tried to call to mind Damián's features; months later, leafing through some old albums, I found that the dark face I had attempted to evoke really belonged to the famous tenor Tamberlik, playing the role of Othello.

Now I move on to conjectures. The easiest, but at the same time the least satisfactory, assumes two Damiáns: the coward who died in Entre Ríos around 1946, and the man of courage who died at Masoller in 1904. But this falls apart in its inability to explain what are really the puzzles: the strange fluctuations of Colonel Tabares' memory, for one, and the general forgetfulness, which in so short a time could blot out the image and even the name of the man who came back. (I cannot accept, I do not want to accept, a simpler possibility—that of my having dreamed the first man.) Stranger still is the supernatural conjecture thought up by Ulrike von Kühlmann. Pedro Damián, said Ulrike, was killed in the battle and at the hour of his death asked God to carry him back to Entre Ríos. God hesitated a moment before granting the request, but by then the man was already dead and had been seen by others to have fallen. God, who cannot unmake the past but can affect its images, altered the image of Damián's violent death into one of falling into a faint. And so it was the boy's ghost that came back to his native province. Came back, but we must not forget that it did so as a ghost. It lived in isolation without a woman and without friends; it loved and possessed everything, but from a distance, as from the other side of a mirror; ultimately it "died" and its frail image just disappeared, like water in water. This conjecture is faulty, but it may have been responsible for pointing out to me the true one (the one I now believe to be true), which is at the same time simpler and more unprecedented. In a mysterious way, I discovered it in the treatise "De Omnipotentia," by Pier Damiani, after having been referred to him by two lines in Canto XXI of the "Paradiso," in which the problem of Damiani's identity is brought up.

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In the fifth chapter of that treatise, Pier Damiani asserts—against Aristotle and against Fredegarius de Tours—that it is within God's power to make what once was into something that has never been. Reading those old theological discussions, I began to understand Pedro Damián's tragic story.

THIS IS MY SOLUTION. Damián handled himself like a coward on the battlefield at Masoller and spent the rest of his life setting right that shameful weakness. He returned to Entre Rios; he never lifted a hand against another man, he never cut anyone up, he never sought fame as a man of courage. Instead, living out there in the hill country of Ñancay and struggling with the backwoods and with wild cattle, he made himself tough, hard. Probably without realising it, he was preparing the way for the miracle. He thought from his innermost self, If destiny brings me another battle, I'll be ready for it. For forty years he waited and waited, with an inarticulate hope, and then, in the end, at the hour of his death, fate brought him his battle. It came in the form of delirium, for, as the Greeks knew, we are all shadows of a dream. In his final agony he lived his battle over again, conducted himself as a man, and in heading the last charge he was struck by a bullet in the middle of the chest. And so, in 1946, through the working out of a long, slow-burning passion, Pedro Damián died in the defeat at Masoller, which took place between winter and spring in 1904.

In the "Summa Theologiae," it is denied that God can unmake the past, but nothing is said of the complicated concatenation of causes and effects which is so vast and so intimate that perhaps it might prove impossible to annul a *single* remote fact, insignificant as it may seem, without invalidating the present. To modify the past is not to modify a single fact; it is to annul the consequences of that fact, which tend to be infinite. In other words, it involves the creation of two universal histories. In the first, let us say, Pedro Damián died in Entre Ríos in 1946; in the second at Masoller in 1904. It is this second history that we are living now, but the suppression of the first was not immediate and produced the old contradictions that I have related. It was in Colonel Dionisio Tabares that the different stages took place. At first, he remembered that Damián acted as a coward; next he forgot him entirely; then he remembered Damián's fearless death. No less illuminating is the case of the foreman Abaroa; he had to die, as I understand it, because he held too many memories of Don Pedro Damián.

AS FOR MYSELF, I do not think I am running a similar risk. I have guessed at and set down a process beyond man's understanding, a kind of exposure of reason; but there are certain circumstances that lessen the dangers of this privilege of mine. For the present, I am not sure of having always written the truth. I suspect that in my story there are a few false memories. It is my suspicion that Pedro Damián (if he ever existed) was not called Pedro Damián and that I remember him by that name so as to believe some day that the whole story was suggested to me by Pier Damiani's thesis. Something similar happens with the poem I mentioned in the first paragraph, which centres around the irrevocability of the past. A few years from now, I shall believe I made up a fantastic tale and I will actually have recorded an event that was real, just as some two thousand years ago in all innocence Virgil believed he was setting down the birth of a man and foretold the birth of Christ.

Poor Damián! Death carried him off at the age of twenty in a local battle of a sad and little-known war, but in the end he got what he longed for in his heart, and he was a long time getting it, and perhaps there is no greater happiness.

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David Marquand

The Politics of Deprivation

Reconsidering the Failure of Utopianism

In September 1927, Beatrice Webb noted in her diary that she was about to begin a new investigation into the administration of outdoor relief to the able-bodied. But her diary entry was remarkably pessimistic in tone. She asked herself gloomily whether her strength would hold out, and then continued, in a passage of almost brutal self-revelation:

> I am not confident that either Sidney or I have the mental vigour and resilience to tackle new problems—we can still collect and marshal already known categories and facts—perhaps as skilfully as ever. But can we discover the *new* issues and gauge the new proportions of the problems involved, *e.g.*, chronic unemployment? And is there any practicable solution, should this unemployment prove not only to be chronic but also progressive? If such a disaster is actually imminent will any change in administration, policy and procedure avail to alter the result? Might it not be a question of muddling through, curbing and checking the present Poor Law administration, until a lowered birth-rate, emigration, and an even higher death-rate brought about a new equilibrium of population with national resources? These pessimistic doubts, are they themselves signs of senility? It seems ridiculous, with the immense strides in the technique of production and the opening out of the world's resources that there should be less work—fewer commodities and services to divide among an industrious and active-minded people! . . . But have we or any other contemporary investigators and thinkers the capacity to discover how to prevent unemployment and how best to treat the unemployed?

In the general election two years later, the Labour Party became the largest single party in the House of Commons; for the second time the unfortunate Ramsay MacDonald faced the delicate task of heading a minority Government dependent on tacit—and highly volatile—Liberal support. In 1924 he and his party had held office in similar circumstances for ten months. Their record was a creditable one, particularly in foreign affairs. His second Government was less fortunate. A few months after his arrival in Downing Street, the American stock market collapsed and the Great Depression began. For the next two years he and his colleagues struggled unavailingly with falling exports and a steadily rising total of unemployment. When they came into office in June 1929, 1,164,000 insured workers were unemployed. By July 1930 the figure was over 2,000,000. By the following December it was two-and-a-half million, and by June 1931 it had reached 2,700,000. Beatrice Webb's forecast that unemployment might prove not only chronic but progressive had apparently come true: and the Government of which her husband was a leading member turned out to be as incapable of solving the problem in practice as she had been of solving it in theory.

Yet its failure was not due to indifference or complacency. Before the first World War, MacDonald had won his spurs as a parliamentarian by his advocacy of a "Right to Work Bill" based on the principle of work or maintenance. Throughout the 1929 Government's tenure of office he was uneasily—sometimes despairingly—aware that he and his Ministers were failing to deal effectively with the most important single problem they faced.

"The flood of unemployment flows and rises, and baffles everybody," he noted privately in February 1930: "At Chequers one can almost see it and hear its swish." As the swish grew louder during the next eighteen months, his bewilderment grew more intense. "Yesterday a baffling day with unemployment," he noted in

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July 1930: "To find work defies everyone." By March 1931 he was admitting privately: "I am not happy about our work. It is too much of the onlooker oppressed by circumstances."

This note of despair was echoed by the Government's advisers. In July 1930 Sir John Anderson compared the Government's position to that of "the captain and officers of a great ship which has run aground on a falling tide; no human endeavour will get the ship afloat until in the course of nature the tide begins to flow." MacDonald replied that Anderson's letter "expresses exactly my own frame of mind. . . ."

THE GOVERNMENT'S failure was mirrored by the failure of its critics on the Left wing of the party. In August 1931, the Labour Government was swept from power by the financial crisis. When the National Government which succeeded it met Parliament in September, the House of Commons debated its economy programme. The debate was acrimonious; but although the new administration was bitterly attacked by the official spokesmen of the Labour opposition, their attacks missed the real target. Arthur Henderson, the new Labour leader, went out of his way to stress that he accepted the need to balance the budget; his criticism of the National Government was confined to the subsidiary issue of whether or not it should be balanced by cutting unemployment pay. James Maxton, the leader of the Independent Labour Party, who had been a thorn in MacDonald's side ever since the 1929 Government came into office, asked pertinently how the Government could restore prosperity by "reducing the purchasing power of the mass of the people"; but instead of following the logic of his own question, found the solution in the total abolition of "your old capitalist system" and the establishment of a vague and undefined "new system, in which the whole nation is a planned unity." In the whole debate, only one speaker went to the heart of the matter. This was Sir Oswald Mosley. In the circumstances of 1931, Mosley argued, balancing the budget was irrelevant, even harmful. What was needed was a solution to "the industrial situation." If that were found the budget could be left to look after itself:

> The continual decline and collapse of the industries of this country makes completely illusory any attempt to balance the Budget. You may balance the Budget on the present basis of revenue, but there is no man in the House who can say with any confidence that this basis of revenue will be long maintained. . . . Revenue rests upon industrial prosperity, and when industry is progressively declining, revenue . . . must progressively decline as well. . . .
>
> Many people seem to think that we are the only country in the world faced with the prospect of a Budget deficit. As a matter of fact ours is the only country in the world which is taking any steps to meet it. Deficits are the fashion nowadays. All the best countries have deficits. . . . There is no collapse of their exchanges, no withdrawal of foreign deposits, no efflux of gold because they have deficits. Why? Because their industrial position is strong. . . .
>
> We . . . should adopt the method of balancing our Budget advocated by Mr. Keynes and other economists which is simply to continue to borrow . . . to provide for the Unemployment Insurance Fund, or I would prefer to say, borrow to provide constructive works to give employment in place of it. . . .

Even Mosley did not enunciate the full Keynesian doctrine of the *General Theory*. (Nor, for that matter, did Keynes: the Keynes of 1931 was not the Keynes of 1936.) The fact remains that Mosley's memorandum of 1931 was the nearest thing to a Keynesian programme produced inside the Labour movement. But Mosley was, of course, a most untypical Labour politician. He had first entered the House of Commons as a Conservative, and had not even joined the Labour Party until 1924; by 1931 he had already severed his connections with it. In any case, he had only a tiny and uninfluential handful of supporters among Labour members of parliament.

BY A STRANGE PARADOX, moreover, the 1931 crisis hindered Labour's conversion to Keynesian economics instead of hastening it. For the solid mass of Labour loyalists, who had tamely supported the 1929 Government until the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour, were the last people to welcome a searching enquiry into the reasons why that Government had failed. MacDonald's so-called "treachery" in forming the National Government provided them with a perfect explanation for everything which had gone wrong before them—and a perfect alibi for their own inability to put it right. On the Left wing of the party, by the same token, 1931 was seen as one more proof that "capitalism" was doomed, that "gradualism" had failed, and that working-class aspirations could only be satisfied by a revolutionary transformation of society. For most of the 1930s, Marx, not

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Keynes, was the patron saint of the Left-wing intelligentsia. The marriage between Keynesianism and Fabianism, which was consummated with the publication of Evan Durbin's *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* (1940) and Douglas Jay's *The Socialist Case* (1937), and which was to provide the intellectual inspiration for the party leadership in the '40s and '50s, did not take place until nearly the end of the decade. Mass unemployment was overwhelmingly the most important domestic problem in British politics between the wars, above all for the working class. Yet the Labour Party failed, not only to solve the problem, but even to appropriate the solutions put forward by others.

WHY WAS IT that the party of the working class failed to solve the most important single economic problem which the working class faced during these years? This is surely the central problem of British labour history between the Wars, yet it is only very recently that historians of the period have begun to answer it, or even to ask it in the sort of way which might eventually produce an answer. For although British labour history in this period has been written from three widely different standpoints, all three share certain underlying assumptions which make it difficult for their exponents to come to grips with the problem.

1. The first of these three standpoints is what might be called the "official" one—the standpoint of the party leadership at the time and of those who, in retrospect, share the leadership's attitude. The best example is Alan Bullock's magisterial biography of Ernest Bevin. Another is Henry Pelling's history of the trade unions. A third is provided by the works of Francis Williams, and a fourth by the memoirs of Hugh Dalton. These authors do not deny that the 1929 Government failed, but they explain its failure in terms of the difficulties it faced and the personal weaknesses of its leading members, not in terms of the structure of the Labour movement itself. We are told more about Ramsay MacDonald's alleged vanity, snobbery and aloofness than about the reasons why he was idolised by the party rank-and-file: more about Philip Snowden's fiscal orthodoxy and lack of imagination than about the factors which had made it possible for him to be accepted as the party's leading financial expert. In any case, their emphasis is on achievement, not on failure: on the growth of working-class power, not on the ineffective way it was used.

2. The standpoint of the "Old Left"—best exemplified, perhaps, by Michael Foot's *Aneurin Bevan*, as well as by a host of contemporary memoirs—is at first sight diametrically opposed. Writers of this school are only too happy to acknowledge that the working class was inadequately served by those who claim to speak for it. The party leadership, as they depict it, was not only muddled and incompetent, but cowardly and even corrupt; and its repeated victories at party conferences are interpreted almost wholly in terms of its skill at manipulating the trade-union "block vote."

3. The same is true of the "New Left," whose standpoint is best illustrated by Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961). It is true that there are fundamental differences between the New Left and the Old Left. Where Foot, for example, is unshakeably committed to parliamentary government, Miliband argues that the British Labour Party has been hamstrung, ever since its formation, by an exaggerated respect for parliamentary institutions. Unlike the Old Left, moreover, the New Left recognises that Labour's failures between the Wars cannot be wholly explained in terms of the failure of the party leadership, and that the Left deserves at least a share of the blame. Nevertheless, New and Old Left alike agree on one vital point. The fundamental assumption of both is that the Labour Party would have been more successful if it had been more militant, and that it would have been more militant if only the rank-and-file had not been bamboozled and beaten down by the leadership. Both, in other words, accept a model of labour politics ultimately derived from Robert Michels. Both see labour politics, first and foremost, as a struggle between a militant rank-and-file and a conservative leadership; and both take it for granted that the militancy of the rank-and-file reflects the attitudes of the working class as a whole.

IN SPITE OF THESE DIFFERENCES, all the traditional standpoints I have tried to describe share three related assumptions.

In the first place, their exponents all agree that the Socialist ideology embodied in the 1918 constitution of the Labour Party was in some sense to the "Left" of, and therefore more "progressive" than, the ideology of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. All of them picture a political spectrum extending from socialism or com-

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munism at one end to conservatism or fascism at the other, with liberalism or radicalism in the centre. Thus, all of them see Lloyd George, or Keynes, or the architects of the "New Liberalism" which provided the intellectual justification of the social reforms introduced by the pre-war Liberal Government—reforms more sweeping in their effect than any introduced by any British Government since the days of Oliver Cromwell—as occupying a position somewhere between that of Neville Chamberlain or Stanley Baldwin on the one hand, and Arthur Henderson or even Ramsay MacDonald on the other. It is true that the Left—both New and Old—constantly berate the Labour Party leadership for being too close to the centre of this spectrum. But the crucial point is that they do not question that the spectrum existed: and that they accept that even the most moderate and pusillanimous of Socialists belong, by definition, at the "progressive" or "Left-wing" end of it.

The second assumption follows from the first. If Socialism is to the "Left" of Liberalism or Conservatism, it follows that the working class —whose creed Socialism is—must be to the "Left" of all other social classes. For neo-Marxists, like Miliband, this assumption is, of course, absolutely fundamental. The proletariat is, by definition, more progressive than the bourgeoisie; if individual proletarians are not, this is because they have not realised what their class interests are and where their historical destiny lies. But even non-Marxists have been curiously slow to question this most pervasive of Marx's intellectual legacies. For them, as much as for the Left-wing historians, the working class is, by definition, a force for progress. Sections of it may sometimes be misled, as in 1931 when two million former Labour voters were seduced into voting for the National Government, but its heart is in the right (*i.e.*, Left) place. All the historians I have mentioned would, of course, accept that large numbers of working men and women voted Conservative throughout the inter-war period, and that even at the height of trade-union membership immediately after World War I only a minority of the working population belonged to trade unions. But although the existence of a substantial working-class Conservative vote was—and remains—one of the characteristic features of British politics, it has received surprisingly little attention from labour historians. For Bullock, as much as for Foot or Miliband, the non-unionised working-class Tory is somehow an aberration or an anachronism: a pale and ghostly figure on the margin of history, who ought not to be there at all, not a being of flesh and blood whose opinions and prejudices are as real and as worthy of consideration as those of his Labour-voting, dues-paying neighbours. By the same token, Labour historians have not examined the extent to which Conservative and Labour working-class voters had the *same* opinions and prejudices: and to which, in consequence, the official ideology of the Labour movement failed to reflect the operative ideology of its supporters at the grass roots. The "secret people of England," Chesterton declared in a famous poem, "have not spoken yet." The working assumption of most Labour historians appears to be that between the wars, the "secret people of England" spoke through the mouths of those who claimed to represent them. It is a risky assumption to take on trust.

FINALLY, ALL THREE STANDPOINTS assume that the central theme of British history between the Wars is to be found in a struggle between organised labour and the established order. To some extent, of course, this is inevitable. Labour historians are, after all, primarily interested in the labour movement. Yet if British political history in the 1920s and '30s is seen first and foremost as a struggle between the labour movement on the one hand and everyone else on the other, and if it is taken for granted that in this struggle the Labour movement represented the forces of progress, a number of questions cannot even be asked, much less answered. To take only one example, one of the most remarkable features of British intellectual history in the '30s is the gradual acceptance of the concept of economic planning. How and why did this happen? If the traditional assumption were right, it would presumably follow that the impetus came from the Labour Party. But in fact, the concept of planning gained ground in all parties, not only in the Labour Party; and it is at least arguable that maverick Conservatives, like the young Harold Macmillan, or renegade Socialists like Clifford Allen, did more to gain acceptance for it than any member of the Labour Party. Indeed, it is conceivable that Labour's conversion to planning ought to be seen, not as the spur which provoked the conversion of others, but as a response to the measures of rationalisation and *dirigisme* actually introduced by the National Government.

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THE SAME IS EVEN MORE obviously true of the central issue of mass unemployment. Keynes had some early converts, even in the Conservative Party; and if Mosley was his prize pupil in the 1929 Parliament, Lloyd George was the second in the class. By the same token, Snowden's fiscal orthodoxy had plenty of equivalents in the Liberal Party as well as on the Conservative benches, while the Conservative nostrum of protective tariffs won a growing number of converts in the Labour Party. Indeed, as Robert Skidelsky points out in his important study of the economic policy of the 1929 Government, *Politicians and the Slump*,[1] the cleavage of opinion on this question had nothing whatever to do with the struggle between a rising labour movement and an entrenched old order. On this question, Skidelsky shows, the really important issue was that between "economic radicals" and "economic conservatives," and the really decisive event was the defeat of the "radicals." Since Labour was in power at the crucial moment, it follows that the struggle must have been fought out inside the Labour Party, and that the reasons for the victory of the "conservatives" must be found in the internal politics of the labour movement.

Skidelsky finds it in Labour's commitment to "a Utopian Socialism which incapacitated it from effectively working the parliamentary system and prevented it from coming to terms with economic reality." The Labour Party, he writes, suffered from a form of ideological schizophrenia:

> On the one hand it was committed to constitutionalism; on the other it lacked a social democratic or gradualist programme without which tenure of power was bound to be rather barren of achievement. It thought in terms of a total solution to the problem of poverty, when what it was offered was the limited opportunity to cure unemployment. It was a parliamentary party with a Utopian ethic. It was not fit for the kind of power it was called upon to exercise.
>
> For what was at issue between 1929 and 1931 ... was not Socialism *versus* Capitalism. It was interventionist Capitalism *versus laissez-faire* Capitalism. The Labour Party's commitment to a nebulous Socialism made it regard the work of the "economic radicals" such as Keynes as mere "tinkering," when in fact it was they who were providing the real choice.

Socialism, in other words, was not merely irrelevant to the struggle between "economic radicals" and "economic conservatives"; it was in fact a barrier to "radicalism." This thesis is obviously oversimplified and overstated. Ramsay MacDonald, with his romantic air and rhetorical ambiguity, may deserve the label of Utopian Socialist, though in foreign affairs, in particular, he was also a patient and skilled negotiator with an excellent sense of timing. In any case, the label hardly fits the Webbs, whose reputations had been made by the patient and laborious analysis of social problems. Yet, as we have seen, the Webbs were as impotent in the face of mass unemployment as MacDonald himself; and in the crucial argument over balancing the budget, Sidney Webb, at least, was on MacDonald's side.

But although Skidelsky overstates this part of his case, there is an important kernel of truth in it. He is wrong in thinking that Labour's ideology was Utopian in the sense that the party rejected piece-meal solutions. In fact, both minority Labour Governments carried through piece-meal social reforms. Its ideology undoubtedly was Utopian, however, in its attitude to the capitalist system as such. For the central premises of Labour's creed between the wars—summed up in the clear implication of Clause IV of the 1918 constitution that the "workers by hand and brain" could only receive the "full fruits of their labour" if the means of production were publicly owned—was that capitalism was immoral because the profit motive involved the exploitation of man by man. Service, not profit, should be the motive force of economic activity, Tawney declared in the *Acquisitive Society*; and Tawney's doctrine was repeated, with varying degrees of eloquence and emphasis, from a thousand Labour platforms. This doctrine is, of course, inherently at variance with the central premise of Keynesian economics, which holds that the profit motive is the engine of economic progress. Admittedly, this cannot have been an insuperable obstacle to the spread of Keynesian ideas in the Labour movement, for the party leadership was in fact converted to them in the end. But although the obstacle was not an insuperable one, it did exist. Keynes was consciously and deliberately seeking to save capitalism from its own internal contradictions. One reason why British Socialists did not follow him was that they did not want capitalism to be saved.

THEN WHY DID THEY fail to seize the opportunity presented by the greatest capitalist crisis in history, and put forward a thorough-

[1] Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump* (Macmillan, 1967). See the review-article by Goronwy Rees in the May 1968 ENCOUNTER.

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going Socialist programme of the kind advocated by Maxton and the ILP?

Once again, ideology provides part of the answer. Before 1914 British Socialists had been deeply divided in their attitude to a fundamental question of political strategy. There were only two Socialist parties of any significance: the ILP and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. But although the leaders of the ILP rejected Marxism, an important minority of the rank-and-file was prepared to flirt with it—at least to the extent of advocating common action with the SDF. Again and again in the twenty years between the creation of the ILP and World War I, this minority raised the flag of "Socialist unity"; again and again, the party leadership had to shoot it down—or else forfeit all hope of building a mass party based on an alliance with the trade unions, to whom revolutionary Marxism was anathema. But the attractions of "Socialist unity" could not be overcome solely by appeals to political expediency. Thus, the leadership was forced to engage in a theoretical polemic against the SDF, and in doing so to put forward a theoretical justification for its decision to cooperate with non-Socialist trade-union leaders in preference to Socialist revolutionaries.

The chief exponent of its theoretical justification was Ramsay MacDonald—who was also the chief architect of the trade-union alliance. MacDonald's attempts to formulate an ideology capable of bridging the gap between the Socialist aspirations of the ILP and the much more limited and prosaic ambitions of the trade unions cannot be discussed in detail here. What matters for our purposes is that the ideology he helped to formulate, and whose most persuasive exponent he was, continued to dominate both his own and the Labour Party's thinking through the 1920s: and that it contained two central propositions, both of obvious relevance to the behaviour of his Government between 1929 and 1931.

The first was that society is an organism which evolves, not a machine which can be reconstructed *de novo*; thus attempts to force the pace of social change will be counter-productive. The second was that the Socialist society of the future would be built, not on the failures of capitalism, but on its successes. Both these propositions made a great deal of sense when they were first put forward. The capitalist system was working reasonably well (albeit unjustly), and the Labour Party was far too weak to think in terms of forming a Government in the foreseeable future. In these circumstances, the most it could hope to do was to persuade a Liberal Government to make greater concessions to organised labour than it would have done in any case. It was, in fact, a pressure group masquerading as a party; and MacDonald's formulations were ideally suited to bridging the gap between the masquerade and the reality. By the '20s, however, all this had changed. The capitalist system was in a state of crisis, and Labour was a party of government. An ideology which had once been a guide to the appropriate sort of action had become an obstacle to action of any kind.

Was it, however, the only obstacle? Granted that Labour's ideology was a barrier to "economic radicalism," it is still necessary to ask why the party whose supporters had most to gain from "economic radicalism" should have gone on embracing such an ideology—and why, given that it did, its supporters did not turn elsewhere. In the 1920s, after all, there must still have been a fair number of working-class Labour voters who had voted Liberal before 1914, and whose commitment to the Labour Party might have been expected to be less deeply rooted than that of a staunch Labour voter in our own day. In 1929 such voters were given an excellent reason for returning to their old allegiance. Lloyd George fought the election of that year on a quasi-Keynesian programme, which might have developed in practice into a British version of the New Deal. But it was the Labour Party, and not the Liberals, which emerged as the strongest party in the House of Commons. Even in 1931, despite the failure of the Labour Government, neither the Liberals nor Mosley's New Party made any inroads on the working-class Labour vote. The "conservatism" of the Labour leadership, in other words, seems to have reflected a similar conservatism on the part of Labour voters, and it is at least arguable that the "conservatism" which reigned at the top can only be explained by a different sort of "conservatism" at the bottom.

This, at least, is the train of thought suggested by W. G. Runciman's recent study of social inequality in 20th-century England, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*.[2] Runciman's argument is complex and subtle, but his central

[2] W. G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (Routledge, 1966).

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thesis is simple enough. It is not actual deprivation which produces social discontent, he argues, but relative deprivation: not the amount of social or economic inequality, but the degree to which those at the bottom of the pyramid feel that they are being treated unequally, and that their treatment is undeserved. But the degree to which people feel that they are being treated unequally depends, of course, on their range of comparison—on their "reference groups," to use Runciman's term. A starving man whose reference group consists solely of other starving men will have fewer complaints against the society which allows him to starve than a wealthy man whose reference group consists of people who are wealthier than he is. But in Britain, at least, working-class people usually have very limited reference groups. They compare themselves, not with people in middle-class occupations, but with other working-class people, and they aspire, not to overturn or destroy the status hierarchy, but to rise modestly within it.

Hence, Runciman argues, the contrast between mass unemployment between the Wars and the extraordinary quiescence of the working class which suffered from it. Immediately after the war, working-class discontent was at its height, because the war had widened horizons, extended reference groups and thus intensified the sense of relative deprivation. Thereafter, the sense of relative deprivation grew less acute, as working-class reference groups were "pared down" by the depression; and working-class discontent declined with it. As Runciman puts it:

> The story of the period between the two wars ... is of a decline or, at least, a considerable easement of relative deprivation among the less fortunately placed; and by egalitarian standards, at any rate, it is a story of continuing discrepancy between objective situation and the level of relative deprivation which could ... have been expected to accompany it. The gap between the promises of the Coalition and its subsequent action is one of the most notorious in the long history of English social reform. Yet this failure, far from arousing a strong and cumulative resentment among those for whom a "really new world" was to be built, never led to the degree of militant egalitarianism which such failure might be thought bound to evoke. ...
>
> The Depression reduced rather than heightened the magnitude and intensity of relative deprivation because few of its victims felt it to be obviously avoidable. ... Many of the victims of the Depression, or even the majority, seem to have thought of themselves as victims of misfortune rather than injustice. If redress of hardship is seen to be feasible, then the greater the hardship the greater the sense of relative deprivation. But the less feasible redress appears to be, the less relative deprivation is felt and the more the frame of reference is restricted to such few advantages as might still be obtained.

Mass unemployment, in fact, was seen as an act of God, not of man; as such, it blunted the edge of social discontent instead of sharpening it.

IF YOU BELIEVE that unemployment is an act of God it is impious to listen to those who claim to know the cure for it. Hence, it ceases to be surprising that the labour movement should have failed to spot the significance of Keynesian economics.

For if Runciman is right, the rise of the Labour Party in the 1920s acquires a very different significance from that usually assigned to it by labour historians. Instead of being a function of the growing maturity and self-confidence of a working class anxious to overthrow the social order, it becomes a movement of self-defence aimed at preserving existing standards. It is true that, on some occasions at least, the "conservatism" of the working class was bitterly opposed to that of the middle and upper classes. However limited their ambitions, and restricted their reference groups, working-class people were prepared to fight hard for what they believed to be their rights. The General Strike, in which the entire trade-union movement downed tools out of solidarity with the miners, was, by any standards, a superb display of self-discipline and collective self-sacrifice. But the point about the General Strike, as about the other great strikes of the '20s, is that it was seen by those who took part in it as a legitimate act of self-defence, not as a conscious and deliberate assault on the citadels of power.

Similar conclusions are suggested by *Angels in Marble*, a new study of working-class attitudes today, by R. T. McKenzie and Allan Silver.[3] The angels of the title are the working-class Conservatives whom Disraeli discerned [as the *Times* put it after his death],

> in the inarticulate mass of the English populace, as the sculptor perceives the angel prisoned in a block of marble.

The Conservative Party could not have stayed in power for most of the last eighty-five years without the support of a substantial minority

[3] R. T. McKenzie and Allan Silver, *Angels in Marble* (Heinemann Educational, 50s).

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of the working class, and Professors McKenzie and Silver have done a major service to political sociology by examining the attitudes and motives of the working-class Conservative voter in depth. But although they have concentrated most of their attention on the minority of the working-class electorate which votes Conservative they also have a great deal to say about the majority which votes Labour; and the picture of the working-class Labour voter which emerges from their findings is, in many ways, even more fascinating than their picture of the working-class Conservative.

Their most interesting finding is that most working-class Labour voters have, at bottom, the same picture of the society around them, and of the proper place of the working class in that society, as most working-class Conservatives have. The two groups differ, not in their values, but in their assessment of the practical capacities of their respective parties, and of the nature of the obstacles which make it difficult to translate the values they share into practice. The ideology, in other words, is the same; only the application is different. As Professors McKenzie and Silver put it:

> A basic image that emerges pervasively in responses of both Conservative and Labour working-class voters is that of a society based on a balance of interests. Conservative voters . . . often see the Conservative Party as necessary to hold the balance between competing interests, to regulate conflict, to rebuke greed (whether of capital or labour), and to apportion to all groups in society—including the working class—their just share of the national product. . . . Many Labour voters, who do not share this beneficent view of the Conservative Party, nonetheless hold a fundamentally similar view of British society. For these people, the Labour Party and the trade unions are defence organisations required to ensure that the working class obtain their "fair share." Only a very few see these organisations as means whereby to transform or radically alter present social and economic arrangements. . . .
>
> Both groups see the party they support not as a means to advancing vigorously the competitive claims of the working class but rather as required to prevent an inappropriate division of social goods. Among working-class Conservatives, the belief is widespread that the working class is itself a source of excessive and greedy demands which threaten the delicate balance required. . . . Among working-class Labour voters, many believe that the *élite* is selfishly prone to press its own interests or to overlook the just demands of the working class; thus, to redress these tendencies, they turn to those who press their claims. . . .
>
> In both cases, this perspective is profoundly in accord with the Conservative view of the balanced, pacific and consensual society—in which no group obtains "too much," in which the goal of maximising one's own share of social services, goods and resources in a freely competitive struggle is not overly disruptive.

ALL THIS HAS AN OBVIOUS bearing on the problems discussed above. It is true that there was a substantial "aggressive" element in the official ideology of the Labour Party between the Wars, as well as a "defensive" element. Even the most cautious sections of the party wished to transform social relationships, to eliminate the profit motive and to establish the common ownership of the means of production. The Left wing of the party differed from the leadership, not about the goals to be pursued, but about the speed of the pursuit. Unlike Harold Wilson or Hugh Gaitskell, MacDonald and Snowden were Socialists in the same sense that Maxton or Lansbury were. To use the terminology of a later period, they were as "fundamentalist" as their critics. Although it does not follow that Labour voters shared the ideology of their leaders, there is at least a *prima facie* case for assuming that some of them must have done so, and that one reason for the dramatic increase in the Labour vote after World War I was that that ideology appealed to an increasing number of working-class people.

When all these qualifications have been made, however, the fact remains that the picture of the working-class Labour voter which emerges from *Angels in Marble*, like the remarkably similar picture which emerges from Mr. Runciman's book, provides a much better explanation of the strange mixture of Utopian rhetoric and conservative practice which characterised the Labour Party between the Wars than that provided by the assumption of an inherently progressive proletariat which has been implicit in the works of most labour historians.[4]

[4] Working-class "conservatism," in the sense in which I have used the term, could, of course, be expected to wane in a period of living prosperity and living aspirations such as we have enjoyed since 1945; and to some extent at least this expectation appears to be borne out by the findings of the Cambridge University study of the effect of "affluence" on working-class political attitudes, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, by John H. Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Beckhoper, Jennifer Platt (Cambridge University Press, 30s.). But this raises questions too remote from the Working-class Movement of the interwar period to be discussed here.

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More light is needed. How far did the increase in the Labour vote after 1918 coincide with the decline of traditional industries and the collapse of old standards? To what extent did Labour candidates at the grass roots actually appeal to the "defensive" psychology discussed here, and to what extent to a more "aggressive" one? How far did their appeals vary from one part of the country to another, and how far can such variations be correlated with variations in the industrial structure and the rate of technological change? These are only some of the most obvious questions, and it would not be difficult to think of others. But Messrs. Runciman, McKenzie and Silver have at least shown where the light is needed most.

In place of heroic Marxist statuary, we are now presented with recognisable men and women, trying to make the best of a hostile environment, sceptical of the grandiose visions held out in the perorations of their spokesmen, but prepared to fight with stubborn courage for their rights. Their stubbornness and scepticism were the stars by which their leaders had to steer. The surprising thing, in the circumstances, is not how little they achieved, but how much.

The Departure

I had known who you were
long before I woke up
and found you beside me,
before I turned the car,
left, down an unknown street
full of such poor people
who stared as we drove through.

At the end, at the wharf,
the ship was waiting still,
the great old famous Queen
with the thousand cabins
and the holds vast enough
for all that was needed
on the long excursion.

My mind was not made up.
And I had no money.
What had I left undone?
Yet I could not return.
But where were they going?
It had not been announced.
And I had not been asked.

While the gulls screamed and swooped
we crept on board her then
over an unwatched plank.
Behind us the city
that had been deserted
so many years ago
spread silent, empty, dead.

Jascha Kessler

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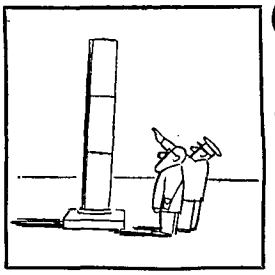

Column

ON ANOTHER page, Alasdair MacIntyre is brave enough to ask the question: why did Nietzsche go mad? One must be brave to ask this because the nature of Nietzsche's madness has always been so difficult to question: it involves a struggle between one's private suspicions and the verdict of medicine.

This verdict has always been General Paralysis of the Insane, the delayed consequence of syphilitic infection in youth. In the notebooks of one of Nietzsche's doctors there is even a reference to the patient's boasting of having deliberately infected himself, and this dramatic boast of self-destruction, which may be imagined to parallel the course of the whole German nation between the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of Hitler, was seized upon by Thomas Mann and made virtually into the centrepiece of *Dr. Faustus*. I think there has never been a greater intellectual novel than *Dr. Faustus*: it is far more precious to me than *The Magic Mountain*. But it is precious as a tremendous fiction; there is no need for us to ask if it is pathologically or historically accurate. We ask this only of the medical verdict on Nietzsche himself.

GPI, as the medics call it, has always struck me as one of the most terrifying sets of bare initial letters—as terrifying, in small, as OGPU or *Nazi*. It carries, as Mann knew, awful overtones of Greek fate and tragedy: a seed, recklessly planted in youth, grows in its giant host and brings him utterly to the ground in the high years of his grandeur. The sin of the father does not descend to the son, as in Ibsen's *Ghosts*: the sin and the punishment remain self-contained in the sinner, whose mad maturity becomes the child of his salad days.

I am sure that if a certain silence has always been the response to Nietzsche's madness, it is because nobody has wanted to argue with *GPI*. I can think of no other reason, because the last half-century has seen psychology replace pathology to such a degree that even cancer has not felt safe from Freud. Had it been even faintly possible to trace Nietzsche's madness to psychological sources, the job would have been done with gusto and marvellous inventiveness. But *GPI* has been the stopper: the fantasy of the psychologist has been quite daunted by the reality of tertiary syphilis.

My own suspicions and fantasies have certainly been silenced in this way. What surprises me is that they have survived at all—that they have hung on, year after year, in a nagging way, too fearful to come out, too persistent to disappear. So, I am very grateful to Professor MacIntyre. He has come forward bravely to have a joust with *GPI*. I hope the loyal physicians will come thundering down on him and give him a terrible beating-up. While he is suffering and fighting, as a brave man should, I shall trot out a few little fancies of my own which the maddened doctors will be too pre-occupied to notice.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHT that Nietzsche's brain began to go when he started to use such chapter headings as "*Why I Am So Clever*," "*Why I Write Such Good Books*." Far from seeing these as intimations of insanity, I have always enjoyed them as jokes. Nietzsche is not the only quarrelsome author who has discovered how impressed people are by immodesty—that though they may pay no attention whatever for years on end to a man's finest ideas, they pay sudden horrified attention if he begins to boast. If boasting were a prelude to insanity, Shaw would have been mad for at least the last half-century of his life: in fact, he merely made boasting part of his repertoire, as many a stage-comedian has. Boasting of this sort is only a game, with two important rules: the boaster must know that he is only doing it to annoy; the public must feel that he is doing it because he believes it. When these two rules are followed, the desired result is obtained by both parties: the boaster can always feel secretly assured of his real modesty, while the public can boil with the rage that it enjoys so much when a great man parades his effrontery. Nietzsche, Shaw, Gurdjieff—they all knew this game very well, though I think Gurdjieff was the one who did most good with it. He is the only psychiatrist who has actually cured patients by behaving perfectly shamelessly on all possible occasions: he is still deeply loved for it by those who were his victims.

I SAY, there are only two rules to this game, but I would like to add that there are also two rules about who may play it. The first is that only very great men may engage in it. When played by much smaller men—mere imitators of Shaw, mere followers of "*G*"—it simply causes one to suspect that they are playing it in earnest, and that their need to boast is only too real. I can never approve of making a boast out of a crying need. Such despair calls for prayer, not comedy.

The second rule about boastful players is that

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they must not be neurotic or highly strung. Shaw and Gurdjieff were as tough as two lengths of old rope: they could prance as they pleased without doing themselves the slightest harm. But when a sensitive, highly-strung man starts telling people laughingly that he is Napoleon, or Jesus Christ, or Dr. Leavis, he wakes up one morning to find that he is. And once this has happened, there is no going back. The slow march to St. Helena, Calvary, Cambridge, is on the move.

I think Nietzsche was this sort of man—great enough to play the game, but not strong enough. Moreover, he took the game too seriously from the very beginning. His boasts of being so clever and writing such good books can be seen as mere jests—particularly as they are perfectly true. What worries one, and seems a far more serious matter, are the liberties he took with his own identity for a large part of his life.

We all know who he was: the Saxon son of a Lutheran clergyman. His "nasty sister" (as Professor MacIntyre very properly calls her) spun endless lies about his life, but where would we be without the two-volume biography she wrote of her brother? "Even when the source of origin is tainted, it has some importance," A. J. A. Symons says of biographical information, and I think this is as true of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's information about her brother, as, say, Trelawny's about Byron and Shelley. Liars are not liars all the time. Often, they tell the truth without meaning to. Again and again, in the course of inventing an untruth, they say something quite honest. Reading between their lies is a dangerous but necessary art.

I have the feeling—I hope it is not a fanciful one—that the general picture of Nietzsche's early life, as drawn by his sister, is true in essence if often false in particulars. She gives a very good account of the sensitive nature of the whole household—of its high ideals, its religious morals, its German goodness. The young Nietzsche who emerges from it seems to be a true pastor's child—delicate, learned, serious, and sensitive. He still seems to be this when he goes to Basel as Professor of Greek. There seems nothing wild and peculiar about the young professor who sits with his students reading contentedly from Grote's great history —a fine, but unexpected, tribute to Grote, this has always seemed to me.

But when I turn to Nietzsche in my encyclopedia, the first thing I read is: "German philosopher of aristocratic Polish extraction." I recognise this curious entry because I know that Nietzsche himself is the author of it. All of us, when we find our ancestors defective, are at pains to substitute ones we like better: indeed, I once knew an agricultural labourer named Harmsworth who was infinitely happy in the belief that he was descended from a Norman baron named Lord Rothermere. And so it was with Nietzsche, I believe. When he began to find the Germans stuffy and pedantic, he riscarded his nationality and became a lively Pole. When liberalism seemed to result in woolly thinking and bad prose, he rejected his middle-class origins and became an aristocrat. Am I right in thinking that these identities were purely imaginary? Can I say justly that as Nietzsche grew older, he invented more and more selves for himself, forever denying what he was, forever insisting on assuming identities that he was unfit to support?

THE SENSITIVE CLERGYMAN'S SON described himself as a dancer, a tightrope walker, a comedian, a creature of mountains and solitude. These were all selves that his thinking and his aspirations required, but I think that none of them came to him substantially, by nature, and I think that the strain of pretending to them added a huge weight to the strain of his thinking and exploring. Nietzsche, I feel sure, had not the stamina to be a tightrope walker, though he had the delicate nervous balance. He could clown fairly well on paper, but playing pantaloon was not his forte as a man. I don't know whether it is the assuming of too many imaginary selves that spells madness in the end, or whether the madness comes from the split that grows between what a man is by nature and what he insists he must be seen as. But I never think of this illusionary Polish aristocrat dancing his lonely way through fields of high comedy without feeling that one day that homely German background was bound to bring him crashing back to earth. Shaw could afford to be greater than Shakespeare, because Shaw could assume any self or posture that came handy to his arguments. But Nietzsche was a fiddle-string, not a hawser.

Of course, if *GPI* continues to claim him, I shall be happy to withdraw. Or will it be said that the illusions I describe above are characteristic symptoms of *GPI*—that it turns sober Saxons into laughing Polish nobles who dance on tightropes? I am afraid the answer is yes—that is exactly what *GPI* does.

PROFESSOR MACINTYRE RAISES another point that matters much more in the end than mere mysteries of personal madness. He says that though one cannot charge Nietzsche with being "the direct ancestor of Nazism" one cannot absolve him entirely from the "intellectual responsibility for making the ideological task of the Nazis easier." Nietzsche's respon-

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sibility lies in his having "license[d] a moral titanism that is all too vague in content and was all too easily put to the service of Nazism. . . ."

I find this a most worrying conclusion. Is it possible for a thinker to sew up his thoughts so tightly that no tag-ends can come within the grasp of evil people? And what if, as in Nietzsche's case, the strongest element in the thinker's philosophy is a sceptical refusal to be either consistent or systematic?

"All absolutes belong to pathology," Nietzsche tells us. He says it again when he says: "You have heard my truth, now tell me yours." He says it once more in the form of one of the prettiest questions ever put: "But suppose truth is a woman?"

Too many of Nietzsche's admirers, good men and bad men alike, have been unable to tolerate this demotion of truth to the level of a whimsical female. They have done their best to elevate their hero by making him systematic (when he struggled not to be) and absolute (when he chose to be "vague"). The Nazis had their wicked reasons for doing so; the men of goodwill follow suit, I think, for reasons of snobbery and status. They are afraid that Nietzsche will not be admitted to the exclusive club of top philosophers unless he shows a complete system to the hall-porter.

To me, the joy of reading Nietzsche lies in the fact that all his books are different and all his conclusions are hypotheses. He loved to take up an idea and follow it as far as it would go—always knowing that this could be done with any idea and that a truth of sorts would always result. But such a truth must never be seen as final, or universal: it was never anything more than one man's choice of a woman. It is this approach to truth that teaches one so much—one's mind is forever being stretched and exercised as one embraces a whole sequence of ravishing ladies. And I am sure that one learns tolerance from this happy pursuit of femininity—that one only smiles, and may even cheer, when some friend rushes to the bosom of some church, or espouses some absurd belief in the Zodiac or tar-water. We have had enough by now of ruthless absolutes and cast-iron systems, and I am sure it is no accident that when W. H. Auden and Louis Kronenberger compiled their *Anthology of Aphorisms*, they took more from Nietzsche than from any other thinker that ever lived.

Of course, on this principle, some men are going to pursue very undesirable and even dangerous women. But I see no way of stopping this, nor do I believe that Nietzsche should be made responsible for it. Should we really say of any man's thinking and writing: "So far, but no further"? Must we treat thinking as we treat obscenity, by putting it out of the reach of minors or allowing it only that measure of impropriety that we decide will not corrupt? I admit that this is a difficult question and that there are writings that in my heart of hearts I would dearly love to ban—whores that should not escape whipping. But lack of self-confidence makes me easy-going. The Baron Rothschild was only being witty when he said to the man who asked him why a stock had fallen: "Sir, if I knew why stocks rose and fell, I should be a rich man." I am being serious when I say: "Sir, if I knew when people should stop thinking, I should be a wise man."

Nefastus Dies

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NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

A New Right?

By Goronwy Rees

THERE has been perceptible recently a feeling that, over and above the unpopularity of the government, public opinion in this country has taken a swing to the Right which, intellectually and emotionally, means something deeper than a mere shift of electoral allegiances. Perhaps the feeling is not unconnected with what has happened in the United States. There, the election of President Nixon has been taken as a sign that not merely a majority of the voters but the country as a whole feels a desire for peace and order, for more stable and settled conditions, for old certainties rather than new frontiers, and many think that this new mood may well last for a decade. A similar change may have taken place here; indeed, after the turbulence of 1968, perhaps the world as a whole is now hoping for a period of relaxation and recuperation.

Not everyone would agree that this is the case in this country. Mr. Alan Watkins, in the *New Statesman*, has categorically denied it, on the evidence of Gallup Polls and other statistical indications of public feeling, and so far as such evidence goes, it would appear to bear him out. What we have, on this view, is nothing more than the revulsion of feeling which affects every government when it is in mid-course and if past experience is any guide there is no reason why, given luck and some degree of good management, the government should not triumphantly survive it by the time the next election comes round.

This is not a view which is confined to the Labour party. It is shared by Conservatives also, and indeed to a surprising degree, considering how alluring their electoral prospects appear at the present time. Partly, of course, this is due to Mr. Heath's quite remarkable inability to create any enthusiasm for his leadership; how can a great victory be won by a commander who inspires such tepid loyalties? But there is also the feeling, which has by now become almost pathological in some Conservatives, that somehow or other Mr. Wilson will bring it off once more; when election day dawns, Batman will have done it again.

There is perhaps a concrete basis for the almost superstitious awe and apprehension, as of some witch-doctor, which Mr. Wilson strikes into some of his opponents. It is the knowledge that, in the main, he is following policies in which they themselves believe, to such an extent indeed that they find it almost impossible to formulate any alternative policies of their own. He really has caught them bathing and stolen their clothes, and there is an awful feeling that, when the electorate is asked to choose between them, Mr. Wilson will be found standing triumphant and fully dressed on the bank while Mr. Heath hides his nakedness in mid-stream.

I myself find these apprehensions exaggerated. Mr. Wilson, for all his cleverness, is not a magician. If Conservative fears of his dexterity have any importance, it is primarily as a symptom of their own confusions and uncertainties, their difficulty in explaining how in practice their policies would differ from his and why Mr. Heath is something better than a Mr. Wilson deprived of his adroitness, his pugnacity, and his resilience—all of which, after all, are qualities which the electorate admires.

How IS THIS CURIOUS FEELING of defeatism, which the Conservative press as well as the party largely shares, to be reconciled with the belief that public opinion is undergoing a sea-change from which it will emerge in a true-blue shade of Toryism, as opposed to the pale colour washes which the Conservative party has preferred in recent years? The answer, I think, is that it is quite easy for both feelings to exist at the same time in the same political party, but while the first chiefly affects the professionals, whose job is to get in the voters, the other excites the amateurs, those who believe that politics is, or should be, a matter not merely of interests but of ideas, of philosophy as well as policy, of a style of life as well as electoral calculation.

After all, we have long been used to the co-existence of, and the conflict between, these two attitudes within the Labour party, and much tribulation they have caused, and many compromises, evasions and self-contradictions they have forced upon the party in the effort to keep the balance between them, which has nearly always meant that the ideas have had to be bent and warped, in case of need abandoned, in order to meet the exigencies of practical politics.

Yet there is no doubt that the ideas, however

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rarely they have been wholly realised, have given the party an intellectual framework which has helped to preserve its continuity and to give it the sense that it does not merely labour to win parliamentary majorities but to create a way of life. They have helped to keep the party alive in disaster; they have helped it to survive the penalties of success; even today, they assure the party that it has an existence and a purpose which would continue even if it met the most crushing defeat at the polls.

It seems to me that what the Conservative party lacks, and is conscious of lacking, at the present time, is precisely a framework of ideas of this kind, and that this helps to account both for its lack of confidence when its electoral prospects should be so bright, and for its tentative and spasmodic attempts to furnish itself with a political philosophy which can be opposed to the philosophy of the Left. It is natural, of course, that such attempts should come, not from the established hierarchy of the party but its periphery, from its rogue elephants and intellectual guerrillas, who mind less about votes than about finding a foothold for ideas within the party. Just so, the universe of discourse in which the Left moves in Britain was not the work of its Ramsay MacDonalds or Arthur Hendersons or Jimmy Thomases, but of intellectuals like Graham Wallas and R. H. Tawney, of philosophers like Bertrand Russell, of artists and writers like William Morris or Bernard Shaw.

A NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION to creating a similar universe of discourse for the Right is to be found in a lecture given by Mr. Tibor Szamuely at Swinton Conservative College and published recently in its journal. Mr. Szamuely, now a lecturer at Reading University, is a distinguished Hungarian exile in this country and was formerly Professor of History at the University of Budapest. It is perhaps natural that, among the conservative-minded in England, Mr. Szamuely should miss that kind of intellectual political discussion which flourishes more luxuriantly on the banks of the Danube than of the Thames and his lecture is in part an appeal to Conservatives to create the kind of atmosphere in which such discussion will be welcome, to make the Right a nest for intellectuals as the Left has been for so long.

I AM SURE this is wholly praiseworthy, though I suspect that the true blue Conservative will regard Mr. Szamuely as some kind of migrant cuckoo dropping a very unwelcome egg among his carefully nurtured fledglings. But

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what is interesting are the materials and sources out of which Mr. Szamuely hopes to build a home for the conservative intellectual. They can be summarised as what Mr. Szamuely calls the Conservative Tradition, to which, he says,

> have belonged, in one way or another, the most original political and literary minds of the past; Hobbes, Johnson, Burke, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Madison, Peel, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Lord Randolph Churchill, to name but a few.

This will appear to many, whether of the Right or the Left, an oddly assorted list; and the tradition becomes even odder as it comes nearer to the present.

> Of the twentieth-century British Prime Ministers the only ones who could be justifiably be called intellectuals were Conservatives; Balfour, Baldwin, Churchill, Macmillan.

To these we can add (in case, perhaps, the intellectual diet offered by Baldwin or Macmillan may look rather thin) the "anti-progressive writings" of Michael Oakeshott, Sir Karl Popper, Sir Isaiah Berlin and Warden John Sparrow and "the genuinely creative approach to political theory of men like Enoch Powell, Quintin Hogg and Angus Maude. . . ." The Conservative can count also on "the two unsurpassed twentieth-century masters," Yeats and Eliot, and "our greatest twentieth-century prose writers—Joyce and Lawrence," and, "in a much more direct way . . . the finest novelist of our time—Evelyn Waugh." Apparently Orwell also belongs in the same ranks.

What is surprising to Mr. Szamuely, however (as it would be to others also if they accepted his claims), is that, despite the dazzling resources on which the Conservative Tradition has to draw, it should be so impotent in the face of the "ceaseless left-wing denigration" which "gives a decisive impetus to the worst crisis of confidence—of national identity itself—in the country's history." Today, however, Mr. Szamuely sees signs of hope. "During these last years the Gadarene rush appears to have been checked, and in some cases even reversed." One of the signs which may help the nation to recover its self-confidence is "the recent 'apostasy' of the two leading Leftish novelists, Kingsley Amis and John Braine." Mr. Szamuely feels that in the future this may come to be regarded as a turning point in our national fortunes, particularly if we consider that to Amis and Braine we can add such "leading literary figures" of the post-war generation as John Wain, Philip Larkin, Simon Raven, Constantine FitzGibbon and Auberon Waugh.

It is a long way from Burke to Auberon Waugh, and an even longer one from Coleridge to Simon Raven; if I were an intellectual and a Conservative I should find it difficult to make myself at home in a tradition which descended from Ruskin to John Braine. Indeed, what strikes one most about this tradition, as depicted by Mr. Szamuely, is the sharp break in continuity between its founding fathers and their putative descendants. If one were asked to identify the break, one would say that it consisted in a very simple difference. There is indeed a Conservative Tradition, and a noble one, in England, but its characteristic tone and quality has been one of devotion to a few historic institutions, among which one would have to count the Crown, the landed interest, and, most of all perhaps, the Church of England as by law established. Modern Conservatism, especially as exemplified in those whom Mr. Szamuely claims as its modern representatives, shows very little of this kind of devotion, not because it is temperamentally averse to it, but because the institutions which once inspired it have been so transformed and eroded by time and change that they have lost the power to move men's minds and hearts. It is very characteristic that Mr. Szamuely, speaking *ex cathedra* as the representative of latter-day intellectual Conservatism, should attack the Church of England as an organisation and mouthpiece of the Lefties, and equally it is natural that Mr. Quintin Hogg should wish to dissociate himself from such a view.

In this sense, Conservatism today worships at empty and deserted altars, and perhaps this accounts for a certain hollow note that echoes through Mr. Szamuely's lecture. Their dilemma is that they have to invent and create institutions they wish to preserve, which is one of the reasons why, in this country, Conservatism has appeared in radical forms, while radical movements, which have in fact created lasting institutions of their own, often show themselves as essentially conservative forces.

This dilemma becomes striking when, at the end of his lecture, Mr. Szamuely displays the intellectual treasures which Conservatism has to offer today. The real intellectual, says Mr. Szamuely, admires "clear-cut, incisive thinking," and as an example he offers Mr. Enoch Powell's: "We are a capitalist Party. We believe in capitalism. We uphold the capitalist economy." Now it may be true that this represents what the Conservative party believes, or should believe, today; it may be true that this is also clear-cut and incisive thinking. But it is a travesty of history, and an insult to the great names which Mr. Szamuely invokes, to pretend that it has

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anything to do with what Burke or Coleridge or Ruskin or Carlyle believed, or with what Yeats or Eliot or Lawrence or Joyce wrote about.

Indeed, Conservatives, if they wish to preserve the true tradition, may have rather better reason than radicalism to abjure captalism and all its works, for it is precisely capitalism and its child, Technology, which is destroying the institutions from which Conservatism derived its strength in the past. Capitalism by its very nature cannot be conservative, for it is a system committed to an infinite process of perpetual change and prepared to destroy any institution which obstructs its development.

Tradition is, as we can see today at every moment of our lives, a frail bulwark against so violent and restless a force, and perhaps that is why Conservative appeals to it sometimes have a somewhat hollow note. In a recent review in the *Spectator*, of a *Festschrift* in honour of Michael Oakeshott, Professor Barraclough has pointed out that even Oakeshott's admirers find a queer lack of content in his conception of tradition, which he consistently opposes to reason as the determining force in human action. "Elusive," "mysterious," "incomplete," "ambivalent," are some of the terms they apply to it, and they might equally well to Mr. Szamuely's use of the word.

PERHAPS THIS IS not surprising. For the Conservative today does not attach himself to a particular tradition, which only lives in the institutions in which it is embodied and cannot survive their decay, but to tradition *tout court*, which is as much an abstraction as any of the ideas to which "progressives" have attached themselves. The *idea* of tradition is in itself as empty of content as the idea of progress; they exist only in particulars, but in the case of progress the particulars are to be found in the infinite potentialities and possibilities of the actual world we live in today; whereas it is precisely these possibilities, any one of which we have the power to realise overnight, which are daily destroying the institutions which are the living body of tradition. What has tradition to say about the possibility of creating human life in a test-tube?

In the debates on the *Loi Combes*, which secularised the French churches (and incidentally provoked Proust to a noble protest), the great socialist Jean Jaurès once cried out in the French Chamber: "You are destroying the cradle that has rocked the human race for two thousand years! What will you put in its place?" Today this is a question which the Conservative has as much reason to ask himself as any "progressive" or "Lefty," and in this respect, dis-

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agreeable as it may be for Conservatives to confess it, New Right is but Old Left writ large; each has to fashion new idols to fill empty altars. Yet when Conservatives begin to look for something New it is time to look out, even perhaps, to reach for one's revolver; for precisely because it rejects reason, and principles, these "rational aberrations" in Oakeshott's phrase, as a guide to action, it is tempted to fall into the abyss of Unreason when it has no traditional faith to guide it. To the intellectual, especially, that temptation is particularly seductive; have we not before us the example of that "clear-cut, incisive" thinker, Mr. Enoch Powell?

On Changing Intellectual Fashions

Comes the Devolution? — By MAX BELOFF

THE HISTORY of ideas is not a very British branch of learning, though it has a persuasive advocate if rather rare practitioner in the person of Sir Isaiah Berlin. One thing that is clearly lacking is a history of intellectual fashions, notably on the political scene. The strong enthusiasms that pull now towards individualism, now towards collectivism have been recorded by Marxists and others, but there are lesser styles that still baffle the observer. Some fashions appear to spread uniformly through a large number of countries more or less at the same time. Others go in counterpoint; thus American administrative reformers have tended to admire the British model while the British civil service is now being recast on somewhat American lines. (In another field "comprehensive education" is the fashionable thing in this country—while the Americans show an increasing interest in selectivity.)

These reflections are prompted in part by the debate of the last two decades over the correct size of the unit of government in the modern world. Twenty, and even ten, years ago, the accent was all on *size*. We were harangued continually by people who proclaimed that the 19th-century Nation-State, quite apart from its war-making proclivities and other disagreeable habits, was much too small for its people to enjoy the full benefits of modern technology and a modern economy. Federations, unions, amalgamations were all the rage. And even though not all of these schemes came off—even though the European idea itself has been "demonnetised"—it was still the case that the national governments themselves, extending their functions from controlling the economy to planning it, have been extending and hence centralising their authority all the time.

There seemed no end to the benefits that could be sought through conferring increasing powers on the governments of large units. In Switzerland, alone in Europe, considerable powers were retained by the lesser units—cantons and even communes—but this was regarded as a pleasant anomaly, like the survival of San Marino or Andorra, and not as something to be taken seriously by the student of politics.

And now quite suddenly, the landscape has changed! Since increasing centralisation has not produced its expected benefits, there has been a sudden reaction against the whole idea, a sudden rediscovery of the virtues of the smaller unit. Sometimes this is strengthened or pervaded by Nationalism—the Scots, the Welsh, the Bretons, the Basques, the Flemings show signs of taking up again the course of their national histories, interrupted centuries ago by conquest and apparent assimilation—just as the Poles and the Czechs and the Slovaks, and other peoples of Eastern Europe did half a century ago. But nationalism is not essential to this feeling that too much is decided too far away. Cornish nationalism, perhaps; but Mercia, Northumbria?—that is really too much to ask. "Regionalism"—a neutral word—covers most of the debate where England is concerned; with Scotland and Wales the argument is more open.

THE REVERSAL, one hastens to add, is a reversal in intellectual fashion and to a limited degree in popular debate. It has not yet made much of an impact on national politics, still less upon the entrenched panjandrums of Whitehall. Indeed just at the moment when the virtues of local initiative are being stressed once more, successive Ministers of Education have been doing their best to force on often reluctant local authorities a new uniform pattern of secondary education (of, incidentally, a highly undesirable kind). Since education is the most important of State functions still largely in local hands, this is not without significance.

Nevertheless, one must assume that an intellectual fashion of this kind will in the end have its effect on both Westminster and Whitehall. To some extent the issue is being forced upon

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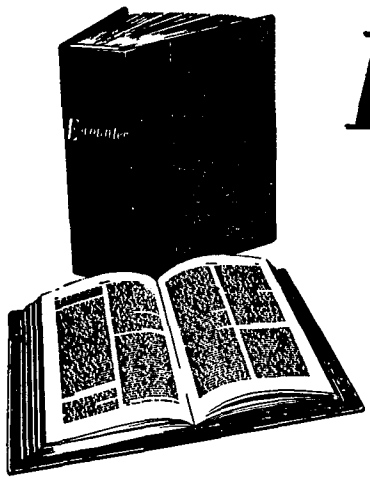
the government. The failure of existing units of local government to conform to the present distribution of population and consequent requirements for services made necessary the appointment of the Redcliffe-Maud commission (in 1966) with powers to recommend major changes in both the units and the structure of the system. The unexpected delay in producing its report suggests that the difficulty of getting agreement has been more considerable than was thought. Meanwhile, the possible electoral consequences for the Labour Party of Scottish and Welsh nationalism has been responsible for the creation of a constitutional commission under Lord Crowther which is expected no doubt to take a decently long interval before saying that nothing can be done, in the hope that by then no one will mind any more.

FOR INTELLECTUALS, however, the moment to get on the regionalist bandwagon is clearly now, and from Mr. John Mackintosh (a professor of political science turned Labour M.P.) we have as a harbinger no doubt of a great deal more, an admirably succinct statement of the problem and a set of answers of impeccable sobriety—unlike some of his compatriots in the Labour Party, Mr. Mackintosh is not one to plead deafness when the siren-voices of Scottish nationalism are heard. He listens—and is, on the whole, unmoved.[1]

Mr. Mackintosh, broadly speaking, comes out for a series of regional governments—nine for England and one each for Wales and Scotland—with roughly identical powers, and ruled as to the powers devolved upon them by elected Councils (in the case of England) and elected Assemblies (in the case of Wales and Scotland). Financial autonomy for the regions would be assured primarily by a system of allocations from the central pool of taxation, the

[1] *The Devolution of Power: Local Democracy, Regionalism and Nationalism*, by J. P. Mackintosh. Chatto & Windus, 21s., Penguin Special, 6s.

Given the fact that Mr. Mackintosh's majority at Berwick and East Lothian is under 2,000, and that even without any Scottish nationalist challenge he is unlikely to retain his seat at the next election, unkind critics have suspected that the scholarly tone of the book is part of Mr. Mackintosh's working his passage back to the world of academe. But that is unfair. Unlike some other ex-dons on the Labour benches, Mr. Mackintosh will always be welcome back to his profession. The Universities could do with more political scientists of his calibre; they have precious few.



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spending of which would (within certain limits as to the provision of equal services) be at the discretion of the regional councils or assemblies and the ministries responsible to them. Mr. Mackintosh thus repudiates both the extended conurbation as the best unit for tackling England's problems and, except in token fashion, special treatment for Scotland and Wales along the lines claimed by the nationalists.

On the whole, I find Mr. Mackintosh's arguments quite convincing. If something like this were put into effect, I would not go to the barricades to stop it; nor, however, would I go to the barricades in support of his plans. Would anyone?

The difficulty is to know how far this new fashion for devolution is a serious reflection of what people want as distinct from what they occasionally say they want, or more often say they do not want. When they ask for devolution, does it mean they want the benefits of centralisation and think they can get devolution and still retain all of them, which seems on the face of it improbable? Or does it means that they want devolution so much that they would make some sacrifices in order to get it?

THE ARGUMENT in economic terms is an old one. There have always been those who disagree with the contention that poorer regions benefit by being joined to richer ones. We are confronted with the classic case of the Italian *mezzogiorno*. But even if it can be shown that the economy of southern Italy suffered when Italy was united, the opportunity for southern Italians to migrate northwards in search of their fortunes has been important for them, just as the high road to England was in Dr. Johnson's view the fairest prospect that could face a Scotsman. Now capital comes back from northern into southern Italy, from England into Scotland—who can say where advantage lies? The matter is further complicated today by the coming of the welfare State. Is anyone prepared to accept a lower scale of State benefits, educational provision, and so on because he happens to live in a poorer part of the country? One doubts it. Mr. Mackintosh's treatment of Northern Ireland is germane to this issue. In the case of Scotland, it is possible to argue (as Mr. Gavin McCrone has shown in a recent article in *New Outlook*) that Scotland—if it contracted out of national defence and overseas aid—could make up for the subsidy of her services that now comes from the British Exchequer. On the other hand, her dependence on the British market would so severely restrict her capacity to have separate economic, fiscal, or monetary policies as to make the talk of

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independence in any genuine sense almost empty of content. That is to say, of course, provided the Scots are not prepared to accept major economic upheavals and (at any rate, for a time) a lower standard of living.

But suppose, the Scots, the Welsh, the Cornish, the Mercians, *et al.*, are prepared to accept Mr. Mackintosh's *via media*, do any difficulties still remain to be faced? Mr. Mackintosh is right to see that at this level it is men not money that is at the root of the matter. But he is optimistic that the giving of greater powers to the regions than are available to the existing organs of local government would get over this. He may be right; but the problem may be harder to solve than he thinks.

At one stage in his argument, Mr. Mackintosh produces figures to show how deficient existing local authorities are in qualified manpower—whether we are thinking of architects, town-planners, child-care officers or of other skilled persons. Mr. Mackintosh's view is that this deficiency arises largely from the fact that most units are too small to provide an adequate career structure and that regional authorities would have more to offer, as indeed they would. But one reason may be that the pay offered is too poor to attract the necessary people—and that this may be due to parsimony rather than to poverty. Would larger units do better?

Or the cause may be even more deep-seated; the people may just not exist, and may never exist. One of the other intellectual fashions of the last few years which is about to take a severe jolt is what might be called the "Robbins fallacy." Provided you give people higher education it does not much matter in what—the "hidden hand" will see that the necessary skills will emerge in the right proportions from the uncontrolled operation of consumer choice. It seems odd that the economics of Adam Smith, rejected in so many respects, should reappear in this one. But suppose the hidden hand does not operate—suppose we go on getting more sociologists and too few child-care officers, more philosophers and too few welfare workers, more experimental psychologists and too few mental health workers? It just could be.

But even if we believe that the problems of professional staffing will resolve themselves, who are to man the new regional councils and the new ministries? Mr. Jo Grimond, Prime Minister of Scotland, perhaps; but Mr. Enoch Powell, Prime Minister of Mercia? And what about the South West?—Mr. Jeremy Thorpe, say the Devonians—Dr. A. L. Rowse, presum-

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Anarchy and Culture

The Problem of the Contemporary University

Edited by DAVID MARTIN

Contributors: John Sparrow, Geoffrey Martin, Bernard Crick, Robert Chester, Rowland Eustace, A. H. Halsey, L. C. Sykes, Ernest Rudd, John Dunn, Stephen Hatch, Paul Rock, Frances Heidensohn, Peter Wiles, Ernest Gellner, John King, Alan Shelston, David Martin, Richard Layard, Donald MacRae

England's Universities are threatened by a mixture of nihilism and reform: the anarchic student confronts the monkish don. This book sets the factual background of the confrontation, and considers such questions as: Are the administrators really threatening university autonomy? What are the facts about expansion? Other crucial issues discussed include the role of the press, the practice and theory of violence, the new styles of student organization and political protest, the probable beneficiaries of current agitation, the philosophies of revolt, and the new types of academic.

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Who are the Progressive Now?

Edited by MAURICE ASH

Contributors: H. A. T. and L. A. Child, L. C. Schiller, D. W. Winnicott, Liam Hudson, D. Pidgeon, Michael Young, Kenneth Barnes, Royston Lambert, Isabel Cabot

A report of a conference on progressive education Dartington Hall Study

40s

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ably, say the Cornishmen . . . it seems highly improbable. The principal trouble with local government is that the calibre of council members is so weak. (Some critics would say that this goes for Parliament too.) Mr. Mackintosh appears to think that high-powered people could be recruited for regional councils for sessions totalling up to two-and-a-half months in the year. What part-time (or near part-time) occupations does he know of from which these people could be drawn?

One must assume that Mr. Mackintosh would not want his councils to be composed exclusively of the superannuated, or of middle-aged, middle-class housewives. Does he not, like so many other reformers who go on adding to the number of public functions that have to be performed, also go on cherishing the view that the country is still full of large numbers of people with no need to earn their livings, available at need to do what the public good commands?

Given the likelihood that the personnel of the regional councils will be weak and those of the necessary second-tier authorities even weaker, are we quite sure that we want Regional Governments or any other kind of devolution? It may be that those closer to the scene are better able to assess local need; but it may be that the only needs they can assess are those of the moment. If we look at the record of destruction of English amenities, rural and urban—natural beauty and historic buildings, not to speak of sewage in the sea—are we convinced that what we would get from devolution would be better government than what the mandarins of Whitehall give us now?

The real fashion of the moment may not be devolution at all—it may be "participation." If it is, if people want to participate, and not watch television, pub-crawl, fill in the football pools, and all the other things they apparently do want, then we shall move away from centripetal politics and get devolution all right. In every Briton there may be a Swiss screaming to get out. But I would want more than a couple of "in-words" among intellectuals to convince me on that point. It would be great fun if one were wrong.

The Liberation from Right Reason

Letter from Germany — By Erwin K. Scheuch

Protest '69 is well under way. In all our German universities and metropolises everybody is once again discussing whether there was any "point" to this or that confrontation, or whether this or that protest demonstration was really "a mistake."

But for those students who belong to any one of the small neo-Marxist sects there is, of course, only one justification for confrontations. It is the exploitation of a concrete case to demonstrate to those who are still unconvinced that their dialectical theory is the right one. A demonstration against the Emergency Laws is for these Marxists not first and foremost a demonstration against an unfortunate piece of bad legislation, but it is meant to be an object-lesson on the undemocratic nature of the whole miserable political system. Any specific excuse—such as a rise in train-fares or a demand for higher *Stipendien*—must remain no more than a point of departure for a correctly planned exposé.

If the effect of a protest against the war in Viet Nam is *only* to strengthen those taking part in their emotional opposition to the war, then in the view of these neo-Marxist tacticians it will have been a failure. The aim of a demonstration against the war in Viet Nam must be to convert those involved to what they take to be a revolutionary interpretation of the logic of events. This was the theory; but in practice it seems to have been lost sight of a long time ago.

The technique of using a confrontation to *create* the facts which one had previously insisted were true—but which no one else could otherwise see—can be used just as well without any Marxist theory. The Black Power leaders in the U.S.A., who seem themselves to be every bit as racist as the most bigoted opponent of Negro rights, have to justify their own racism by showing that everyone else is a racist too. But what do you do about nice white liberals who do want equality—and even favoured treatment—for the black man? The answer is to belabour your white friends until they yowl, and then say: so you are just like all the others after all! And how can you best annoy these

Professor Erwin K. Scheuch *is a young German sociologist, and the director of the Institute of Contemporary Studies at the University of Cologne. His most recent book is a study of student revolt entitled "Die Wiedertäufer der Wohlstandsgesellschaft"* (The Anabaptists of the Affluent Society).

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well-meaning people? Answer: by varieties of aggressive and absurd behaviour. The less earnest theory these radicals have, the more freely they can let their imaginations go when playing the game.

Confrontations of the German *A.P.O.* (the so-called Extra-Parliamentary Opposition) have in the past always had one important aim—to use the reaction or backlash of the provoked party to generate a feeling of new unity among the demonstrators. This has been used in its most direct form by militants, who stand in front of policemen and denounce them as blankety-blank pigs and wait until the man in uniform hits out. The art of demonstrating then lies in seeing that the blows are directed against the less committed demonstrators and, if possible, against completely uninvolved persons. A whole choreography has been worked out for this purpose.

The following incident is an example of this way of forcing a confrontation by apparently absurd behaviour, and it is typical of a great deal that goes on in West Germany without ever becoming "newsworthy." The senate of the University of Cologne had decided by a majority to increase student participation in the running the university—including a say in the election of a Rector—but the voting had to be repeated because there had not been a quorum. Before this, however, the election of a Rector was due to take place according to the old constitution. The *S.D.S.*-controlled Students' Union (ASTA) had some fears of losing the coming student elections; they had no cause. The solution? ASTA organised a "Go-In" at the *Aula* where the elections for the Rector were being held, and caused noisy disturbances (banging on desks, heckling, etc.). Naturally there was the usual *A.P.O.* journalist and photographer from a local paper on hand to spread the news of the artificially provoked incident and its aftermath.

But there was no incident. The professors kept their cool and voted; and afterwards they approved the participation of students in the election of future Rectors. By means of expedient reform the so-called "forces of reaction" prevented any more such incidents from being engineered. What does the determined demonstrator do? A resolution: "We declare the election of the Rector invalid." Eventually a writ for trespass had to be taken out. When this writ was later withdrawn *S.D.S.* students proceeded to occupy the Rector's office.

BASICALLY, THE CONFRONTATION SPECIALISTS have done no more than rediscover an old tactic used by governments which do not have popular support. Old Metternich-style politicians used to engineer a crisis with another state and hope that the artificially aroused foreign enemy would make for solidarity at home. This technique can be used for almost any political ideology or national interest.

Today's demonstrations by groups which are lightly touched by the influence of Marxist theory seem extraordinarily playful when looked at in the perspective of the bloody history of revolutions and uprisings. French students in the spring of 1968 did not storm police headquarters to get arms—or dash off to occupy a radio station so they could call on the French people to rise up against de Gaulle. They simply built barricades. The police stood at the ready, watching the hard physical labour of building a mini-barricade, until the demonstrators set light to it. Then they would attack to take over control and extinguish the fires. And the next evening the whole thing was repeated. Once upon a time there was a reason for such barricades: they prevented the royalist cavalry from breaking into the revolutionary defence area. Today they are just a symbol.

Marching ten abreast with arms linked is also a symbol which German students have adopted from one of the less happy periods of German history. The significance of the attempt to break through the police cordon formed at a scene of confrontation is not suddenly to occupy some area or building, but to organise a kind of test of nerve (as a sort of measure of *A.P.O.* militance). If the forces of protest and public control have time during a gradual escalation to get used to one another, the confrontation will generally pass off without the casualties usual in more serious incidents The demonstration then becomes an open-air theatre, in which the promised performance can only take place in the presence of the police.

THESE ELEMENTS of "play" determine the form of demonstrations and confrontations to an increasingly pronounced degree. The political phraseology of many demonstrations simply conceals the tendency of confrontations to become a means of self-expression or simply a kind of public exhibition. The intellectual disorientation of the *S.D.S.* gives individual activists and groups more leeway than ever before to organise confrontations which are "bloody good fun"—or, at least, exciting.

In every society there are more or less strong taboos, and every taboo can be used to provoke a hostile reaction by breaking it. The "natural" targets are those taboos which are already half-abandoned, since an attack on them leads to a division in the public. In many areas of public life there are bits of formal procedure which

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are ripe for this purpose. An example: at the opening of a new academic building the Rector of a large German university said the following: "According to ancient tradition the Minister of Culture of the Land, nobly represented by the Chancellor, hands over the key of the House. The Rector then places it in the hand of the man responsible for this new place of work. . . ."

Passing a useless key round in this way is a very tempting target for irony; there might be more sense in passing a sausage from hand to hand. The idea that the Chancellor nobly represents the Minister of Culture is, of course, noble nonsense. One would hope that a Minister's time-table is taken up by more important things than handling useless keys around.

Pointless rituals as a basis for Happenings do, however, have a disadvantage for the purpose of confrontation. Witty burlesque of outmoded conventions has *too* much success with the public; and the lack of general opposition undermines the effect of generating special militant solidarity. For this reason it is not surprising that in an age when conventions are largely being discarded the provocation *has* to be more extreme in order to stimulate opposition.

German protesters nowadays garnish their ideological gobbledygook with snapshots of colleagues ensconced naked on the toilet seat. They hope to shock. During the recent Essen song festival the Cologne provo-theatre group *"Floh de Cologne"* dressed up as apes, pro-

The Coming of the

West Berlin

THE LAWYERS *for the special hearing had not yet taken their places on that November Monday when the most violent street fighting in the history of post-war Germany broke out in front of the West Berlin courthouse, near the Spree River, not far from the Charlottenburg Schloss. 1,000 students, many of them in improvised battle-gear (helmets and water-proof jackets), attacked 400 confused Berlin policemen with a hailstorm of bricks and stones, exploded fireworks, and showers of plastic bags filled with bright red paint. They were on the march to defend their lawyer, Horst Mahler, whom the attorney-general wanted to ban from practising his profession. The reason: the 32-year-old lawyer of the Left had taken part in a riotous demonstration outside the Springer Press House after the Rudi Dutschke shooting last spring, and this was considered to be incompatible with the professional ethos. The attorney-general had accused him of participating in the violence outside the Springer building, which he denied, and now his defenders were marching to help him with paramilitary support.*

The demonstrators broke through the police barriers at the first charge, waving flags and chanting "DOWN WITH CLASS JUSTICE" *and* "HANDS OFF MAHLER!" *The Berlin police were unable to deal with this massive attack, and retreated. Not even the armoured car with a mounted water-cannon could contain the offensive. For the first time Left-wing Berlin militants were using Parisian battle tactics. They threw cobble-stones, and as a substitute for real workers (they never did manage to make contact with the proletariat) they had a group of "Rockers" to help them. They captured one of the water-cannons and turned its powerful jet against the retreating policemen, who by this time were finding their rubber truncheons useless against the attack. One mounted policeman was struck by a brick and lay bleeding on the street. Two demonstrators fled into a nearby house, but were chased out again by the landlady. "If you force us to go out," said one of the youths, "they'll beat us half to death." "That," said the woman, "will only serve you right. . . ."*

When the demonstrators had used up all the street ammunition, they were rescued by a piece of good fortune. They stopped a lorry full of rubble and helped themselves. Some of the policemen began to lose their self-control too, after seeing colleagues taken away with head concussions and other injuries, and started throwing the stones back. A reporter asked one policemen whether that was right and proper, and he replied, "What, then, should we do? In the Weimar days there would have been by now the order to shoot. That water-cannon is useless. . . ." Then the police began to use tear-gas, but the wind was against them. Once again the policemen had to retreat, even though they had received reinforcements of several hundred additional men; the stinging gas was being blown back in their own eyes. It was the mounted police who finally decided the battle. They scattered the attackers; the improvised barricade of automobiles proved useless against the charging horses. A Molotov cocktail failed to ignite an overturned car. The revolutionaries finally retired to the Technical University for a discussion about strategy and tactics.

Left behind were 130 wounded policemen and dozens of injured demonstrators, a number of passers-by who were hit by rubber truncheons, a 74-year-old pensioner with a broken leg (for which he had the Rockers to thank), four disabled police horses, and 2,371 cobble-stones.

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jected pornographic slides on to a screen, dropped their trousers in front of the audience, and showered one another with paint. But it failed: no police arrived. (Incidentally, Essen's *Jugendamt* had financed this ideological strip-show out of public money.)

The American Frank Zappa recommends public masturbation. The Beat group "The Fugs" have suggested urinating on graves. All, of course, to be accompanied by the vocabulary of socialism. Another possibility of pornographic shock-effect (already proposed in London by Mr. Kenneth Tynan) is sexual intercourse on the stage. But this porno-shock may be weakened nowadays by its current, almost convincing simulation. There are other difficulties. Pure pornography among groups on the New Left repels ordinary members of the public and, more than that, gives them plenty of opportunity to wonder about the mental health of the provocateurs, *i.e.*, their fixation on anal functions.

So the search goes on for more effective techniques, and one striking form has been developed over the past year. The best term to describe it is "parasitic publicity." The idea is to choose an event which is of some public interest in itself, and then cause a disturbance while it is taking place. If it is an event with elements of ritual and solemnity, so much the better. An example of this was the attempt to disrupt the awarding of the Peace Prize to the African poet and statesman Léopold Senghor in Frankfurt's Paulskirche. The decision was

New Stone Age

IN THE UNIVERSITY'S *Auditorium Maximum, the current leaders of the Left felt that "the whole situation" had been changed by the street battle. The students felt that the fact that the Rockers had fought with them meant that they had at least begun to make the contact with the Berlin working class they had been longing for. This fraternisation between the Student Left and the Rocker gangs was greeted with euphoric cheers. One S.D.S. leader named Christian Semler referred to the day's efforts as a "turning-point" —"our street battle has reached a new level of militancy."*

It seemed to be the making of yet another New Left. The famous leaders of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) *were not present, but The Kommune was there and Kommune leaders (Rainer Langhans and Dieter Kunzelman) became the party whips of the new faction. Langhans—whose associate Fritz Teufel was recently sentenced to prison—concluded that "the operation was senseless—because it was not directed against the Law itself but against the Police...." He recommended Rocker tactics as a model for future action, e.g., the dispatch of small strong-arm groups to attack Judges in their homes. A leaflet called for "targeted terrorism (such as kidnapping certain state attorneys)...." An S.D.S. speaker named Fichte said that "for every page of Marx we read, we must throw a stone."*

Was this the beginning of a new Stone Age? Two journalists in the Auditorium had their note-books confiscated and the pages with their notes destroyed. One radio reporter's tape-recording was erased. The new New Left was taking over the methods of the old Old Right. The eccentric rebels who had once protested against narrow-minded complaints about beards, long hair, and coloured trousers, were now a hysterical mob who, spotting a member of the audience dressed conventionally with jacket and tie (instead of the obligatory open-necked shirt or sweater), shouted "Police Spy, take it off, take it off!" He happened to be a student in his tenth semester.

MOST OF THE EMBATTLED STUDENTS *were in their first semester. The ideologised old guard was giving way to an even more militant new guard, and there was a euphoric enthusiasm shining on their faces after their baptism of fire that day. The lack of interest shown by the better-known Left leaders revealed just how far the extra-parliamentary opposition had become split. It began to look like a case of the children devouring the revolution. A number of* APO *spokesmen have criticised the decision to go in for street fighting. One Left-Liberal student group said that "with this kind of tactics the Student Movement is well on its way to discrediting itself totally." The Social Democratic student group insisted on abiding by the old decision: "Violence against Things, but not against Persons." Nevertheless, the chairman of the Technical University's Student Council was among those arrested by the police in the demonstration. The Rector had given permission for the students to use the Auditorium for their meetings on the condition that no "illegal actions" would be advocated. But the demonstrators discussed the advisability of arson, the manufacture of Molotov cocktails, and the storming of a Christian Democratic party conference with the argument: "It must become our meeting—or it just won't take place!..."*

As it happened, the result of the special legal hearing was the dismissal of the official complaint against Horst Mahler. The court was surprised at the paucity of evidence presented.

DIE ZEIT/F.A.Z./DER SPIEGEL

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made that the affair was reactionary and, on some dialectical logic, even "racist" and, thus, just had to be protested against. Had the militants in their hundreds or thousands gone off to a protest-meeting in the Frankfurt Woods, this would have been worth a tiny paragraph on the back page of a local newspaper. As melodramatic interference with a quasi-sacred event, it was reported in the whole national press and —what was more important to the strategists— on all television screens.

THE EVERYDAY TECHNIQUES of public relations and propaganda do not differ essentially from the old *Agitprop*—but the technique of parasitical publicity is new: it exploits another person's publicity. In yourself you may be next to nothing—as a person, or an idea, or an event—but you can become news by interfering with something else which is considered, for one reason or another, to be of public importance.

This technique was used a lot during the American election campaign in the autumn of 1968. Wherever Hubert Humphrey appeared there was always a relatively small group shouting extremist slogans against him. In themselves 400 demonstrators, somewhere in New York, would not have meant very much, but 400 people molesting a Vice-President in a de luxe New York hotel are front-page news. Consider, too, the "Critical University" movement in Germany as organised by left-wing students themselves (often with the support of the old universities): it failed everywhere. On the other hand, if you march into a large lecture hall, take control of the podium, and broadcast your own ideas to people who came to hear something quite different, then you have made news.

Parasitic Publicity, Provocation by Pornography, Confrontations with the Police (which you stage-manage yourself)—how can students (and now, more and more, school-children) maintain with such consistency exercises in new-style self-expression? This is where the function of political phraseology becomes operative. If someone advocates urinating on graves without reference to politics, people wonder about his sanity; but if he does so as a condemnation of the Viet Nam war, or takes his clothes off while claiming to be demonstrating for some good progressive cause, he will have the support of many of the older liberals and enlightened radicals, who will inevitably consider it all to be very socially significant. If you are a teenager wrestling with the police and you say you are doing it because of the moral superiority of a future social order, you cannot fail to get the sympathetic attention of the editors of all German radio- and TV-stations rather than psychiatrists and youth welfare workers. The ritualistic invocation of ideology is both an alibi and a defence.

IT IS ALSO something else. After receiving a payment of 50,000 D-marks for a new composition for the Hamburg orchestra (to be played under a red flag and a portrait of Che Guevara), Hans Werner Henze wrote:

> Music may be able to portray the Utopia of human freedom in a vague way, but the freedom we mean is greater than its surrogate, the work of art. . . . What we really need is to create Man's greatest work of art: World Revolution.

Here is the clue as to why so many of our German writers take leave from writing novels and poems, and wander off to utter the most eccentric nonsense about political economy and social structure, why we hear such puerilities from cabaret comedians about problems like the coal-mining crisis in the Ruhr. Intellectually the content of such statements is as meaningful as the views of any old man in the pub on the subject of the rocketry of space travel. Both the old man—and the sweet young actress who adores a Demo—have merely done a bit of reading and repeat what they have just heard (rather inaccurately), laced with a few technical terms.

When German writers like Martin Walser,

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singers like Franz-Josef Degenhardt, cabaret artists like Wolfgang Neuss or a stage-manager like Egon Monk use words which sound like sociology, or deal with subjects which are normally considered political, they mean something else. The aims of art can no longer be achieved by artistic means; in effect, art no longer has any claim at all. Art as content is presumed to be *passé*, and it now only exists as an effective technique at the service of an ideology and its socio-economic theses.

The aesthete is dead, and aesthetics has been conscripted into the war for human liberation. Yet how deep really is the poet Hans-Magnus Enzensberger's concern with sociological facts or the composer Henze's with publicising the findings of radical political science? One could almost imagine a role in adult education for such communicative gifts. The arts of pedagogy and persuasion could be transformed. The writers from the Suhrkamp Verlag would work up the latest research on determinant factors in population movements in the style of the *"nouveau roman."* Who better than Pop-artists could demonstrate the true role of the bourgeois newspaper as revealed by communications research? As for Op-artists, they might take on the demonstration of what urban sociology has discovered about everyday metropolitan alienation. Nietzsche hoped for a *"fröhliche Wissenschaft,"* and indeed the days of joyful science would be upon us.

But the joy is premature. How seriously can we take the announcement of the death of all art and aesthetic forms? Is the transformation of poet into politician and musician into messianic leader to be believed? I am afraid it is only another exercise in fictional deception. There has been no real break but only familiar continuity: art and religion maintain their ancient functions, now using the language of modern social science. The *Agitprop* artist has always been fated to misunderstand himself. He sets out to create something vastly more important than mere Art, but his creative motives and techniques remain in the wonted patterns, despite the stylish decorations of current artistic experimentalism and mass advertising methods.

When musicians, poets, and philosophers (Henze, Enzensberger, Sartre) call for a Revolution on behalf of humanity, can they be said to be talking of social change in any rational political sense? Our German word for it used to be *Revoluzzertum*, the compulsive romantic destructiveness which believes in the beauty or the morality of smashing a political system every now and again. And up until recently it was confined to South American students, tortured prophets from backward Russia, or a small *jeunesse dorée*. Now it has become a general phenomenon; but it is not for all its popularity or universality any more of a movement which can be characterised as an authentic effort at political reformation. It remains a temporal *Ersatz* for the salvation of the Last Judgment.

Art and revolt, obscenity and freedom, chic and barricades—the "dialectics of liberation"—none of this has anything to do with the real and concrete interests of the world of political initiative and social reconstruction. The function of the pseudo-revolutionary confrontation is only to liberate man from his own right reason.

Letter from Berlin

The Corpse of the Free University

PERHAPS IT HAS MADE too many headlines, perhaps it has been talked about too much for people to accept the fact: but the truth of the matter is that the Free University of Berlin is paralysed. Its academic freedom has died in physical confrontations, and its unity has been fragmented in the disintegration of political and bureaucratic authorities.

Two faculties, the *Medizinische* and the *Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche*, are managing to carry on in creaking fashion, but the University, like a car with only two wheels, must be regarded as a wreck. There is no point in covering up the truth, or in shutting one's eyes to the coarse slogans scrawled triumphantly on the windows and doors of the campus at Dahlem. One of them is "SCHEISSE," and another is "WE'LL CLEAN OUT YOUR PIGSTY! (*Wir werden euch den Saustall ausmisten!*)." Black fists are daubed everywhere, as well as the slogan (in English, in big, lurid, yellow letters) that describes the situation, STUDENT POWER Now.

Whether you go to the university area at noon or at midnight, the police are there in white helmets, riot squad cars are waiting with engines running, young riot squad men from the *Bereitschaftspolizei* are standing in front of canteen vehicles sipping their tea or soup. There are police patrols between all the university buildings and guards on all the doors. That is just about all that's left of the Free University.

In the seminar studies the atmosphere is that of a guardroom. There are barricades outside the lecture halls and offices, the floors are littered with bottles and dishes, and tens of thou-

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sands of pamphlets and leaflets. Shattered glass windows, battered cupboards and filing cabinets, cut telephone wires, scorched doors—that, and not any residual academic work by teachers or students, dominates the picture.

IT MAY WELL BE that the Berlin Senate would for obvious civic reasons like to play down the truth, but can it ignore the outcome of the past few months? The *Philosophische Fakultät*, the largest in the university, cannot guarantee that it will function at all or have anything to offer the great majority of students who want to work. When one knocks at the door of a professor's room, the key is turned in the lock before it is opened. Lecturers invite their students to their homes, or meet secretly in the back room of some remote tavern to hold a seminar. Professors put away their papers in secret hiding places, hold faculty meetings somewhere in the woods of Grunewald, or insist that the university building in which they

Fffffruuustrationnnnnnnn

Hanover

HIGH UP near the ceiling soap bubbles were colliding with paper aeroplanes. Down below a pianist with a moustache was plonking out the "International" *in rumba time. In between, a trickle of hectographed leaflets fluttered down from the balcony saying in pale blue letters, "Fffffruuustrationnnnnnnn. Stick it up your arse.... This is an S.D.S. congress."*

There was certainly frustration there when the German Socialist Student Association (S.D.S.) continued their 23rd conference of delegates in the University Mensa at Hanover. It had already begun and been interrupted at Frankfurt, and finally, after a total of 105 hours' argument about the "Konzeption" of the S.D.S. it was clear that it was split up into factions and no longer had a "Konzeption."

"The S.D.S. is faced with the dilemma," noted the ideologist from Berlin, Bernd Rabehl, "that the anti-authoritarian revolt has destroyed its own organisation." Only a few days before, in Frankfurt, France's practitioner of revolution, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, had publicly told the opponents of the S.D.S.: "What power does the S.D.S. have then? None. So there is no point in attacking it. The thing is just to ignore it...."

Beneath a portrait of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Alexandrovitch Bakunin, members of the S.D.S. attacked one another for three days. S.D.S. women protested against "repression" by the S.D.S. men, "traditionalists" distributed leaflets against "anti-authoritarian" comrades (title: "Shall the S.D.S. be Split?"). Mini-groups from some colleges—as the Berliners contemptuously said—made "comical emancipatory demands" against the larger groups (e.g., Frankfurt, which in its turn had a feud with Hamburg). In short, "an insane pluralism" and a "blind particularism" (as Wolfgang Lefèvre from Berlin put it) prevailed.

THE ONE THING *the students agreed on was the call to dismantle "social-democratic structures in the association." The form the new organisation should take remained a point of dispute. The Berliners and Frankfurters called for strong central control, while the Hamburgers wanted to do away with the national chairmanship. (All power to be dispersed "below," in their soviets or councils.) And also to "organise the S.D.S. into communes" and indeed to "break up the conference." ("Stop the gigantic waste of time!") The Hamburgers were then accused by the Heidelbergers of "disruption," and by the Tübingen delegation of "obstruction."*

People taking part in the discussion thought that the lack of unity was caused by the fact that they were "very much out of step" (Lefèvre) with one another. While the provincial S.D.S. groups were still theorising, students in larger cities were already fighting with the police. While comrades from small university towns were still struggling for student participation at the level of one-third representation, the issue in Berlin was "student control" of whole Institutes.

After some endless and unproductive debates, Hans-Jürgen Krahl (of Frankfurt) diagnosed "a demoralising hang-over feeling" among his comrades. The demoralised listeners lost interest in the speeches, and became so unruly that the chairman of the conference continually had to ask for quiet, and remind them "that we are not holding a Sit-in against a Professor." Berlin's Rabehl thought that after this "circus" it was simply "crazy to elect a national committee," and "to hold an association together by force when it is breaking up into so many groups." Rabehl left before the end—as, little by little, did half the delegates.

The rest agreed with the Heidelberger Günter Mangold, that their position may be "beschissen," but "it is not as lousy as all that," and he proposed a five-man group for the chairmanship. The most outstanding member was the Berlin sociology student Dr. Phil. Reinhard Wolff (the elder brother of the former S.D.S. leaders Karl-Dietrich and Frank Wolff).

The opposing factions were quite ready to vote for this quintet en bloc (there were only two votes cast against them) as the new chairmen are not really chairmen at all. They see themselves as a "Kollectiv," and promised not to lead in an authoritarian way but to act as a "central co-ordinating body" for individual student groups.

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convene be cordoned off by a thousand policemen.

The professors of the Law faculty have officially stopped teaching. In the faculty of Economics & Social Science the students achieved this end by calling a strike. So far the premises that have been occupied—and in this context "occupied" generally means devastated —are the seminar rooms of the departments of German, English, and Romance Languages & Literature, the Friedrich Meinecke Institute, the Otto Suhr Institute, the East European Insitute, the offices of the deans of the faculty of Philosophy and Law, and those of the rector and curator of the university (in which students, dressed like bank-robbers with stockings over their heads, broke open cupboards, flung files out into the street and then made a bonfire of them).

Berlin's Senator for culture, Dr. Werner Stein, still complains at the professors' failure to maintain their courses, but can a university teacher be expected to agree to teach under police guard and to submit himself to inquisitorial discussions? Is it not too much to expect the great moderate mass of students to turn up day after day in the *Auditorium Maximum* of the university for endless votes and meetings to take the wind out of the sails of the Ultra-Left led by the ASTA, the *SDS*-dominated Student Council?

Something less than 2,000 of the university's 15,000 students still attend the meetings. At these the radicals triumph, stifling with their accomplished "democratic" tricks and tactics all rebellious dissidence by their fellow-students who still want to study as they please. Nevertheless, if the university campus were not occupied by 1,000 police, and if their encampments and patrols did not indicate the university's true plight, these meetings, in spite of the way in which they are manipulated by the New Left strategists, might just show the disaster in a less harsh light.

Schoolboy "airplanes," made of paper on which resolutions are inscribed, sail through the air of the *Audimax*, and the children of the revolution shout with delight. The so-called "father of the revolution," *der Revolutionsopa,* an old man with a red handkerchief and in a red shirt who never misses a meeting, is enthusiastically applauded whenever he waves his stick and calls on the comrades in a hoarse voice to "Hold out!" or to "Smash the Reactionary Gang!" Girls in mini-miniskirts go to the rostrum and call—no, not for *die freie Liebe* or anything cheerful like that—but for "the transformation of the structure and ideology of the Institute for *Romanistik*."

A vote is taken on whether or not to adopt a resolution to buy beer for the suspected *Geheimpolizisten* present, or to throw them out, or not to vote on the issue at all. A certain convivial atmosphere survives. Traces of it are even perceptible at the Otto Suhr Institute, where professors allow themselves to be interrogated by students, and liberal visitors, standing next to the piles of débris from the shattered glass doors, discuss with reformist-minded lecturers the outlook for the Institute's brand new constitution.

LITTLE *bands of revolutionaries, isolated and lost—that was how the Student Movement which for one brief moment of Germany's post-war history seemed the* avant-garde *of society now appeared. Blind zealotry was the only thing left. "We must smash our fists into the faces of the State apparatus," one Berliner shouted across the hall. "Those who are still theorising do not belong with us. . . . Those who are not prepared to throw Molotov cocktails into the offices of the State prosecutors have no business with us."*

A guest of the conference called Karl Truschel, a seasonal garden-labourer in the patrician houses of Hanover, said it was "idiotic" to "alienate the fringe support of the APO *[the so-called "extra-parliamentary opposition"] by militant action." He was greeted with whistles and cries of "Revisionist!" The left-wing gardener stepped down from the podium shaking his head.*

After its stone-throwing offensive against the Berlin police last November the S.D.S. has become isolated from the APO, *and is now looking for a pact with other isolated groups. "What about the million people who are condemned in German courts every year?" Don't they form a "reserve army" for student fighters in the Class War? According to Rainer Geulen, a student of the Free University in Berlin, attempts to "mobilise the embittered class-consciousness" of those condemned by "class justice" were promising.*

Geulen gave some tips for possible activities of revolutionary cell-groups within prison cells. There was the example of Berlin-Tegel where newspapers "printed on toilet-paper" had been distributed behind bars. In Moabit, Fritz Teufel had typed out 400 anti-Viet Nam leaflets for his fellow-prisoners.

The lack of student agitators who could operate in prison-based groups did not seem to worry the S.D.S. As Geulen said, "Our Long March through the institutions of this society must necessarily also lead through its institutions of punitive justice."

DER SPIEGEL (*Hamburg*)

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THE SAD REALITY of the situation becomes evident again when one looks at the files in the Rector's office containing the assembled complaints of professors and students about acts of individual terrorism by extremists and still more in the gloomy and stuffy chambers of the Moabit criminal court. The fair-ground atmosphere of the manipulated mass meetings is only a façade. Like officers after a lost battle, professors who have not completely lost heart report in baroque academic German that a student has called them *Mistsau*, a dirty pig, that their lectures have been disrupted, that their secretary has been forced to hand over the keys of the filing cabinet, the closets rifled, and examination reports stolen.

In his office at the Moabit criminal court, Herr Blaesing, the public prosecutor, an unexcitable official long familiar with university affairs, pores over his records and decides which students are to be charged with disciplinary offences. He has already expelled eleven students, all charged with violence and all participants in the physical disruption of the work of the university, for a term or two. They are of course free to appeal. The extremists describe this exercise of authority as *Bürokratenterror*, bureaucratic terrorism, but what they really mean is that the revolutionism of the young militants is still being treated as if it were a student prank. Put another way, it might be truer to say that in the winter term of 1968–69 the university was effectively destroyed because the authorities hesitated too long before responding to the terrorism with any signs of intellectual insight or moral firmness.

Only now is the administrative machinery of a university, which is neither psychologically nor organisationally equipped for such circumstances, slowly and solemnly starting up. Only now are the Berlin Senators realising that their procrastination merely contributed to the escalation of the violence. The police no longer create the impression that they are "just out for a stroll in Dahlem," and only now is the Senator for Culture & Education ceasing to believe that the appropriate policy is to present the mere appearance of a functioning university as reality. Only now is the policy of relegation being used and ASTA's official state subsidies, which have financed the revolution, being turned off.

At the end of the winter term the University is only a corpse. In the presence of the ruins the hope that by the spring or the autumn it will again be *eine Stätte des Lehrens und Lernens*, a place of academic freedom and learning, looks very slender indeed.

Bernd Nellessen

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Utopia and Criticism

The Radical Longing for Paradise — By DAVID LODGE

THE MATERIALS for an interesting and valuable book are to be found in *Yesterday's Tomorrows*,[1] but *Yesterday's Tomorrows* is not such a book. Professor Armytage's subtitle is "A Historical Survey of Future Societies," but he has made a collection rather than a survey. He has read a great many books, written from classical to modern times, which describe future societies, but seems to have no more idea of what to do with them, apart from displaying them, than if they were postage stamps or matchboxes.

The collection is arranged in little groups, but the grouping is seldom helpful, and the headings under which they appear seem to have been composed in the spirit of a literary editor looking for an eye-catching by-line. What kind of sense does it make, for instance, to tag William Burroughs and J. G. Ballard together with the label "The New Left"? There is a section entitled "The Barchester of 1980; Early Clerical Science Fiction" which includes only two books: the Rev. W. Tuckwell's *The New Utopia; or Europe in 1985* (1885) and Anthony Trollope's *A Fixed Period* (1882). Neither is about Barchester, and Trollope was not a clergyman nor, in this case, writing about the clergy. The invention of pseudo-categories could scarcely be taken further. There might have been some point in comparing Tuckwell's book with the Catholic prophetic novels of R. H. Benson, *Lord of the World* (1907) and *The Dawn of All* (1911), and with Corvo's *Hadrian the Seventh* (1904); but Professor Armytage makes no mention of these works.

It is not, however, Professor Armytage's omissions that one feels obliged to protest about (given the enormous scope of the subject, such lacunae are inevitable), but his failure to organise meaningfully the material he *has* accumulated. There are repetitions—the same descriptions of the same texts recurring without any cross-reference or further information. Often the titles of the works discussed have to be hunted down in the notes at the back of the book, and sometimes they are not even to be found there. There are almost incomprehensible synopses of novels like this:

> In *The City* (1952) men have passed away from the earth leaving it to dogs and robots. Round the hearth fires, dogs ask, "What is man? What is a city? What is war?" The Websters, who have produced intelligent talking-dogs, go with mankind to Jupiter in order to live longer. After centuries the last of the Websters revisits earth and finds the world controlled by dogs and robots.

Whether the Websters are dogs or humans, or something in between, is far from clear. Neither is it clear whether the first sentence describes the situation with which the story starts or (as the last sentence implies) ends. Least of all is it clear what the point of the fable is. But we are given no further information. Most of Professor Armytage's titles flash past in this kind of blur, like stations in the night on a journey with no ascertainable destination.

There is one clue to Professor Armytage's purpose, and it is very revealing. It comes in the Preface, where he refers, with lip-smacking jargon ("normative-relevance-tree-techniques") to the application of computer-science to prediction:

> The rise of these "conflict models" of prediction out of what might otherwise be regarded as a welter of futuristic fantasies is the theme of this book. It tries to show how, out of the long process of preparatory day-dreams, imagined encounters, wish-fulfilments, and compensatory projections, a constructive debate about tomorrow is emerging, providing us with operational models of what tomorrow could, or should, be.

[1] *Yesterday's Tomorrows: A Historical Survey of Future Societies*. By W. H. G. ARMYTAGE. Routledge, 35s.

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The first thing that must be said is that this "theme" is not "shown" at all, in the sense of being held before us by a continuity of argument and illustration. Computer-based prediction is not shown to "rise out of" the literary Utopian tradition, but merely to come after it. (This may be a more accurate account of the matter, but scarcely constitutes a "theme"). Secondly, the last part of the book does not deal either fully or exclusively with "operational" prediction, but, also in a hasty and erratic fashion, with a wide assortment of discursive prophets, including Norman O. Brown, and Teilhard de Chardin (though it inexplicably ignores two contemporary utopists of at least equivalent importance, Herbert Marcuse and Marshall McLuhan). Thirdly, the prefatory remark quoted carries the astonishing implication that only in the light of modern scientifically-based prediction does the literary utopian tradition appear more than a "welter of futuristic fantasies." Which is to say that Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Erewhon*, *The Time Machine*, *Brave New World* and *1984* (to name just a few examples) only become of serious interest by courtesy of the RAND Corporation.

THIS PREFATORY REMARK confirms what one may deduce from Professor Armytage's somewhat clumsy way of describing and summarising fictions and his avoidance of comparative value judgments; namely, that he has embarked on a study of largely literary materials without having (on the evidence of this book) any real feeling for literature or any idea of how to read a literary text. And this disqualification fatally vitiates the otherwise admirably broad range of intellectual interests he possesses. Because the texts in question are, in many cases, obscure and forgotten, even an inadequate account is better than nothing, and there are certainly some fascinating facts and quotations to be found in *Yesterday's Tomorrows* by the persevering reader. But even as a reference work it has the great disadvantage of not having an index of titles.

THE FUTURE AS NIGHTMARE,[2] which covers some of the same ground as *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, is not exactly a scintillating piece of work, but at least it has a thesis and gives a reasonably clear account of the texts with which it is concerned. The trouble is that the thesis is too simple, or too simple-minded, to allow an adequate exploration of the texts.

Mr. Hillegas begins by saying what has already been said by Anthony West, Bernard Bergonzi and others, namely, that although H. G. Wells is commonly regarded as the creator of optimistic utopias, his own early scientific romances were charged with a deeply pessimistic imagination and were *anti-utopian* in spirit. From this Mr. Hillegas goes on to argue that the anti-utopian tradition that developed later in the century, partly in conscious reaction to the later Wells, was deeply influenced by the early Wells —that Wells left his mark, one way or the other, on every subsequent imaginative exploration of the future.

This is an interesting paradox of literary history which has a certain important element of truth. Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), for instance, which began as a conscious parody of Wells' *Men Like Gods* (1923), has certain features which can be plausibly traced back to Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), where creatures are artificially bred and conditioned to perform specific functions. George Orwell witheringly dismissed Wells' utopias as "the paradise of little fat men," but his *1984* has many features in common with Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) and "A Story of the Days to Come" (1900), which Orwell had read and admired. For example, in the latter story the love between the hero and heroine is threatened by the tyranny of soulless super-state; the couple escape from the huge megapolis of the 22nd century into the deserted countryside where, like Orwell's Winston and Julia, they are wakened by the delightful novelty of a thrush's song. The same basic pattern—the opposition between two lovers and a repressive State—is to be found in Zamyatin's *We* (1925), which certainly influenced Orwell. But Zamyatin had also read and admired the early Wells (indeed, wrote a book about him). It is difficult to distinguish between the details transmitted directly by Wells to Orwell, and those transmitted *via* Zamyatin; but either way, Wells remains seminal.

Mr. Hillegas has collected a great deal of evidence of this kind, sometimes from other critics, and it adds up to an impressive testimony to Wells' influence and importance. Without wishing to diminish the latter, however, one may still question Mr. Hillegas' apparent determination to trace *everything* in the modern utopian or anti-utopian tradition back to Wells. He underestimates on the one hand the extent to which Wells was himself influenced by an existing tradition, and, on the other, the extent to which actual historical events conditioned subsequent developments of the utopian imagination.

Mr. Hillegas does do justice to one major influence on Wells, but it is a non-fictional one —that of his teacher T. H. Huxley. From Huxley, Wells derived that pessimistic reading of the theory of evolution which permeates his work

[2] *The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians*. By MARK R. HILLEGAS. Oxford, 55s.

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from *The Time Machine* onwards. In his celebrated Romanes Lecture "Evolution and Ethics" (1893) Huxley maintained that "cosmic nature is . . . the enemy of ethical nature" and that "retrogressive change is just as possible and practicable as progressive." If, as science suggests, the earth is slowly cooling,

> then the time will come when evolution will mean an adaptation to a universal winter, and all forms of life will die out, except such low and simple organisms as the Diatom of the arctic and antarctic ice and the Protococcus of red snow.

This plainly foreshadows the closing section of *The Time Machine*. Mr. Hillegas tells us that "occasionally Huxley became so pessimistic about the evolutionary process that he would have almost welcomed 'some kindly comet' to sweep the whole affair away." It would be tempting to see this as the source of Wells' story "The Star" if it had not been established by Ingvald Raknem that this story was virtually plagiarised from the French writer Camille Flammarion. Flammarion is not mentioned by Mr. Hillegas. Neither is George Griffiths' story of the twenty-first century, *Olga Romanoff*, summarised thus by Professor Armytage:

> In this the Aërians, thanks to their aeroplanes and vril, are able to renounce their control of the world, now connected by monorails and possessing a cheap power from atomised carbon and petroleum. Communication has been established with Mars. Indeed everything looks peaceful until a descendant of the last Czar (from whom the book takes its name) kidnaps the son of the President of Aëria, obtains the secret of the Aërian strength and builds an invasion fleet at Mount Terror near the South Pole. She is well on her way to overthrowing world government when the earth is burnt to a cinder by a comet. Everyone is killed except the Aërians who have taken refuge under a granite mountain, from which they emerge to repopulate the world.

There is an abundance of "Wellsian" motifs and properties even in this bare summary, yet *Olga Romanoff* (1894) appeared a year before the publication of Wells' first scientific romance. Many other forerunners could be found. These ideas were "in the air" at the time, as Bernard Bergonzi has shown so well in *The Early H. G. Wells*. Mr. Hillegas justly claims that when Wells borrowed from other writers, he transformed his borrowings; but he seems reluctant to accord the same freedom to the writers who subsequently borrowed from Wells—they are presented as inevitably confined to playing on a pitch marked out by him.

THIS BRINGS ME to the second objection to Mr. Hillegas' thesis, that he minimises the extent to which post-Wellsian utopists have assimilated

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into their fictions experience which was either not available to him or which he failed to cope with imaginatively. When all the debts of Orwell to the early Wells have been totted up, the fact remains that *1984* derives most of its power and authenticity from Orwell's imaginative exploitation of facts, emotions, and iconography specifically associated with Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany and World-War-II-devastated Europe. "Even Newspeak, I think, at least suggests Wells," says Mr. Hillegas, anxious to claim every crumb for Wells, and blithely ignoring Orwell's life-long critique of political jargon. He generously concedes that "the post-catastrophe story is not solely Wellsian in its origins" but pleads, "surely it is the pictures of world-collapse given by Wells that have most influenced the development of this kind of story in the twentieth century." The influence of Hiroshima is mentioned in a casual aside.

The chief disappointment of *The Future as Nightmare,* however, is that it does not examine the obvious question that is raised by its *datum.* Wells wrote anti-utopias before he wrote utopias, and the question is: why did he change, *in this direction*? Mr. Hillegas evidently does not find this surprising or puzzling (at least he never comments on it) but surely it is. The reverse shift is not so uncommon. Anti-utopias like *We, Brave New World,* and *1984* have been described as products of the "disillusioned left."[3] Wells, however, seems to have started off disillusioned and later embraced optimistic "illusions" (though they were not socialist ones). The scientific progress and evolutionary process whose end results are so gloomily predicted in the early stories, are held forth as the bases for desirable brave new worlds in *A New Utopia* and *Men Like Gods.*

The explanation for this shift is probably best sought in biographical and psychological investigation. But the literary critic can try to trace the literary symptoms of this change; and this Mr. Hillegas has signally failed to do. He observes, for instance, the co-existence of two "messages" in *The First Men in the Moon*—firstly, that the Selenites' "scientific" civilisation is inhumane, and secondly, that it is superior to ours—but does not see that they are incompatible. Cavor, the scientist-explorer in that story, is shocked when he comes upon young Selenites "confined in jars from which only the fore-limbs protruded, who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort," yet wonders if it is not "really in the end a more humane proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them." Wells is trying to have it both ways here, but the horrific image of the bottled Selenites inevitably undercuts the (in itself) perfectly valid criticism of actual socio-economic injustice. Clearly even slavery is more "humane" than the Selenite system; and the way is thus open to anti-utopians like Aldous Huxley to defend man's right to be miserable but human. *The First Men in the Moon* seems to mark the point at which Wells' "progressive" ideas began to pull damagingly against his pessimistic intuitions, thus bringing to a close his remarkable first period of work. Henceforward, he gave his progressive critique of contemporary society more consistency by offering utopian models that were much more humane than the Selenite civilisation, but unfortunately much less imaginatively stirring.

THIS NEXT STAGE in Wells' career is well represented by *A Modern Utopia* (1905), now reissued with an introduction by Mr. Hillegas that for the most part duplicates the relevant sections of his book.[4] The confidence in "science" is now almost unqualified: "Science stands, a too competent servant behind her wrangling, underbred masters, holding out resources, devices and remedies they are too stupid to use." Wells supposes a planet that is a replica of ours, but in which the resources of Science have been rationally applied. The result is a World Welfare State of decorum and efficiency, governed by a dedicated managerial *élite* called (with an odd touch of swashbuckling atavism) Samurai. Wells was subsequently to expend much time and energy on propaganda for this concept of a world *élite*, proving, if proof were needed, that he had no fondness for socialism in the classical sense, or even for democracy.

Time has been cruel to *A Modern Utopia.* It would be difficult to arouse any enthusiasm for this vision of the good life today. Most of the things against which the current wave of youthful protest is directed in the Western world are to be found hopefully foreshadowed in Wells' Utopia: an examination-selected meritocracy, a mixed economy, paternalistic state welfare, bureaucratic control over personal freedom, privilege based on productivity but controlled by fiscal means, minority participation in government, academic monopoly over culture, and a generally low-keyed, rather conformist contentment regarded as the desirable norm in behaviour. Wells' Utopia is a class society in which the classes are distinguished not by breed-

[3] G. Woodcock, "Utopias in Negative," *Sewanee Review* (1956), p. 85.

[4] University of Nebraska Press. $2.45.

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ing or by cash, but by intelligence and vocational aptitude, with a decent middle-class standard of living available to all. In a sense it was a generous attempt on Wells' part to imagine a social structure which would make available to everyone the kind of success and happiness he had personally achieved in the teeth of great disadvantages. Or, more cynically, you could call it the paradise of little fat men.

A Modern Utopia is, however, more engaging than it sounds in summary. Wells disarms many criticisms by anticipating them—even Orwell's jibe. The narrator is a thinly-disguised self-portrait, "a whitish plump man, a little under the middle size and age.... His front is convex. He droops at times like most of us, but for the most part he bears himself as valiantly as a sparrow." This persona and his rather philistine companion, a botanist, are transported to Utopia, by a kind of illusionist's trick, in the middle of a mountain ramble in Switzerland. But the persona is not merely the usual heuristic narrator who describes his adventures, but also the authorial voice, emphasising the purely speculative nature of the discourse, treating Utopia as a game, and justifying the rules according to which he is playing it. There is thus no attempt to create an illusion of reality, or even to obtain a willing suspension of disbelief —merely an invitation to participate in a "constructive debate about tomorrow," and, by implication, about today. It is all very skilfully managed, and reminds one of what a fluent and poised writer Wells was in his prime. There are many characteristic flashes of the shrewdness that for the most part preserved him from cant, *e.g.*: "no men are quite wise enough, good enough and cheap enough to staff jails as jails should be staffed."

The 19th-century obsession with eugenics leaves its mark on Wells in his insistence on compulsory birth-control, and if necessary, sterilisation, for non-productive members of the community ("the almost criminally poor") thus gradually and humanely legislating them out of existence. But there is a long chapter on Race which is remarkably enlightened for its time, and still relevant in ours—indeed Wells correctly prophesies that

> race prejudices... are shaping policies and modifying laws, and they will certainly be responsible for a large proportion of the wars, hardships and cruelties the immediate future holds in store for our earth.

Mr. Hillegas curiously omits any reference to this chapter, which is in many ways the most impressive of all. Professor Armytage devotes only four lines of comment to the entire book.

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AFTER THESE STRICTURES on *Yesterday's Tomorrows* and *The Future as Nightmare*, it seems only sporting to try and suggest what would be an adequate critical approach to the kind of writing we call "utopian" or "science fiction" (the two categories are not synonymous, but there is a good deal of overlap)—writing which takes such a wide variety of forms, from the almost purely discursive to the almost purely fantastic, and which is written with such a bewildering variety of motives. Admittedly it is a formidable problem, and requires a pluralistic solution.

The first requisite, of course, is that these works be approached as literature, with the methods and skills of literary criticism. All utopias are fictions not only in the wide sense propounded by Vaihinger and lately developed by Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), according to which all mental constructs are "fictions," but in the older, more ordinary sense of the word which has made "fiction" synonymous with imaginative literature: *i.e.*, all utopias, by definition, deal not with the actual, but with the possible. They differ from conventional literary fictions by enlarging the concept of the possible to include what is, in common-sense terms, impossible, usually by positing some radical change in the conditions of life. But this only makes the break with actuality the more distinct. However discursive a utopia may be, however minimal, or even non-existent, its narrative content may be, however closely it resembles a description of actuality, it plainly cannot be such a description; it must be a fiction.

In theory, events could convert a Utopian fiction into fact, by fulfilling every prediction made in it; but this would convert the utopia into a document of divine or occult revelation. (In the same way failed prophecy can be converted into utopian fiction, as many people now regard the Bible.) In practice, even fortune-tellers do not live entirely by the accuracy of their predictions, and it would be a naïve and low-minded reader who judged a utopia by such criteria. Orwell's reputation does not hang on the state of the world in 1984. Utopias, like other literary fictions, are not to be verified or falsified by a straightforward appeal to history. This does not mean that they can always ignore history, any more than novels can. It depends on the literary conventions chosen by the utopist, the level on which he invites our assent.

The critic of this kind of work therefore must first of all know how to read, must be sensitive to language, alive to the varieties of narrative tone and method, analytically responsive to what Wayne Booth calls the "rhetoric of fiction," and possessed of some theory of narrative genres and their historical development. Such a theory has been admirably expounded recently by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg in their *The Nature of Narrative* (1966). They suggest that the realistic novel which has dominated narrative literature for the last two hundred and fifty years was a new synthesis of four narrative modes—history, realistic imitation, romance, and allegory—which were originally held together in the oral epic, but split off and developed separately in the late classical and medieval periods; and that the new synthesis is now showing signs of disintegration. Clearly, the utopian tradition (in its widest sense) provided an outlet for narrative writers with a bent towards allegory and romance (*e.g.*, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne, Lytton, Lewis Carroll) during the long reign of the realistic novel, and is being heavily drawn on by *avant-garde* novelists now leading a breakaway from realism (*e.g.*, William Burroughs' *Nova Express*, John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*, and Lawrence Durrell's *Tunc*). But the realistic novel had a profound effect on the utopian tradition, and many of the most important modern utopists have worked within its conventions. "For the writer of fantastic stories to help the reader to play the game properly," said Wells, "he must help him in every unobtrusive way to domesticate the impossible hypothesis." It was the tradition of the realistic novel, which began by domesticating the improbable, that provided Wells with the necessary technical devices.

THE INFLUENCE goes deeper. For the orthodox realistic novelist the creation of a plausible "world," densely specified and historically consistent, is usually the frame within which he explores imaginary characters and actions that are the main focus of interest. It only needs a small adjustment to make the frame imaginary and the main focus of interest, and the characters and actions of importance mainly as filling out and authenticating the frame. This is what happens in most modern utopian and science fiction. The conventions of the realistic novel can thus invest the imaginary frame with an astonishing pseudo-historical verisimilitude, so that Orwell's London of 1984, for instance, seems just as "real" as Dickens' London or Zola's Paris. We experience it from within. The future is enacted before us in the continuous present of the narrative past tense.

THERE WOULD SEEM to be plenty of scope in the utopian tradition for critical enquiry into basic myths and archetypes, as practised, for instance, by Northrop Frye. It seems likely that the dominant myth or archetype behind modern utopian and anti-utopian

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literature is that of Paradise and the Fall.[5] Without discounting the importance of classical philosophers and the pagan oracles, it can be legitimately argued that long-range speculation about the future is particularly congenial to the Judaeo-Christian world-view which sees history as linear, with a beginning, middle and end, rather than as cyclical. The Bible, as I have suggested, can be read as utopian fiction; and the Apocalyptic tradition, which Frank Kermode takes as a model for all fictions, is clearly a major theme in utopian literature, particularly of the "science fiction" variety, so often concerned with the end or near-end of the world. Ends, however, imply beginnings, and it is no coincidence that writers of futurist fiction also often write stories about early man—either like Wells, to dramatise the story of evolution, or, like Golding, to identify the "aboriginal calamity," "the point from which we went astray."[6]

Original Sin is a central issue in the utopian tradition, as Mary McCarthy recognised when she took the title and epigraph for her wise and witty satirical novel about a utopian experiment from this remark of Rousseau: "it must be confessed that, both in this world and the next, the wicked are always a source of considerable embarrassment."[7] Optimistic utopists are almost bound to be Pelagians. St. Thomas More, I believe, was regarded as not entirely free from this heresy. Teilhard de Chardin was deeply suspect in orthodox eyes. In the more liberal theological climate now obtaining in the Church of Rome, the American Jesuit Walter Ong is able happily to weld together evolutionary theory, redemption history, and the technological prophecies of his fellow-Catholic Marshall McLuhan into a highly optimistic Christian utopianism. But Chesterton's often-quoted ob-

[5] Since writing this, I have read George Kateb's excellent study *Utopia and its Enemies* (Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), which makes this connection very forcefully. Kateb defines modern utopianism as "the desire to renew creation, restore the faded glory, cancel the Adamic curse, make the earth heaven. . . ."

[6] The first phrase is John Henry Newman's; the second, Graham Greene's, quoting Newman in *Journey without Maps*. Greene has written a moving post-catastrophe story, *"A Discovery in the Woods"* (1963). Also of interest in this connection is the "Dawn of Man" prelude to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a brilliant but ambivalent film with, it seems to me, unreconciled utopian and anti-utopian elements.

[7] *A Source of Embarrassment* (1960). As Professor Kateb writes: "A specter has always haunted utopianism—the specter of original sin."

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jection to Utopias is more representative of the orthodox Christian position:

> The weakness of all Utopias is this, that they take the greatest difficulty of man (*i.e.*, original sin) and assume it to be overcome, and then give an elaborate account of the overcoming of the smaller ones. They first assume that no man will want more than his share, and then are very ingenious in explaining whether his share will be delivered by motor car or balloon.

It was therefore entirely logical of Wells to insist in *A Modern Utopia* that "the leading principle of the Utopian religion is the repudiation of the doctrine of original sin."

The archetypes, however, are apt to enter by the back door. At the beginning of *The War of the Worlds*, we are told that, unknown to man, "across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes" —an earth that is described as "a morning star of hope" to the Martians on their dying planet, "green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility." Is this not the same earth that the envious Satan sees across the gulf of space in *Paradise Lost*, *"this pendant world, in brightness as a star,"* green, fertile, and vulnerable to his angelic intellect? The parallel should not surprise us. Milton's poem, as well as being the major transmitter of the Genesis myth in English, is also the first great work of science fiction, complete with War in the Air and interplanetary travel. The moral fable of *The War of the Worlds* follows the pattern of *Paradise Lost* almost exactly. Man, foolish, vain and over-confident, is routed by the intelligence of a ruthless and desperate extra-terrestrial power, but is saved providentially from complete destruction—in Milton by God's grace, in Wells by "the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon the earth" (bacteria, to which the Martians are not immune). There is even a *felix culpa* message at the end of *The War of the Worlds*:

> It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for man; it has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence, the gifts to human science it has brought are enormous, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind.

The novel ends with these words:

> And strangest of all is it to hold my wife's hand again, and to think that I have counted her, and that she has counted me, among the dead.

Compare our last view of Adam and Eve (also, in a sense, reprieved from death):

> *Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wiped them soon;*
> *The world was all before them where to choose*
> *Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.*
> *They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,*
> *Through Eden took their solitary way.*

Milton is more wistful, but he surely furnished an archetypal gesture, not only for Wells, but for all those *sci-fi* movies where, in the last reel, the young man and woman who have escaped from a devastated earth step out of their spaceship hand in hand to explore a virgin planet. (Such optimistic post-catastrophe stories also get reinforcement from the story of Noah and the Flood.) Beneath Milton's overt message of regret for the Fall and trust in a Divine Redeemer, there is a strong current of faith in human solidarity, which allows alternative interpretations of the poem and of the myth. One can either deny the tragic irreversibility of the Fall (as optimistic utopists do), or defend the solidarity of suffering (as most anti-utopists do). "I don't want comfort," cries Aldous Huxley's John Savage to the World Controller,

> "I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin."
>
> "In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."

And Savage agrees. Most readers who reject the overt message of the Fourth Book of *Gulliver's Travels* claim the same right. The Utopia of the Houyhnhnms is intolerable: "they may have all the reason, but the Yahoos have all the life." Johnson's Prince Rasselas, cooped up in the Happy Valley, "long[s] to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness." Voltaire's Candide voluntarily leaves Eldorado because it is boring; and besides, Cunegonde is not with him.

Cunegonde reminds us that Eros is invariably an anti-utopian force (though he is catered for in the specialised utopias of pornography—what Steven Marcus calls "Pornotopia").[8] Wells is at his least happy in legislating for sexual morality in *A Modern Utopia*, and Huxley at his most effective in satirising the bored, sterile promiscuities of *Brave New World*. In More's fairly liberal Utopia prospective marriage-partners are allowed to see each other naked before committing themselves, but fornication is punished severely "because they realise that unless people were restrained from promiscuous relations, few would come together in conjugal love." Reviewing a biography of William Morris recently, Lewis

[8] See the article with that title in ENCOUNTER, August 1966.

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Mumford remarked that "love is the one thing that still goes wrong in Morris' socialist utopia," *News From Nowhere*. The Houyhnhnms are singularly frigid, and it is a young female Yahoo (rather less repulsive than the rest of her tribe) who makes a pass at Gulliver. This takes us back once more to Genesis and Milton.

One of Milton's most daring additions to the Genesis myth was to make Adam participate in Eve's sin out of love for her, and we may see here a major source of that basic opposition between two lovers and a repressive régime which recurs so often in anti-utopian fictions. The pastoral and erotic idyll into which such lovers usually escape for a brief moment of happiness is a fairly obvious nostalgic image of a pre-lapsarian paradise; and William Empson has found it all too easy to identify Milton's God as "Big Brother" and his Heaven as a totalitarian state.[9]

The rhetorical and mythical analysis of the utopian tradition must be supplemented by a historical analysis, by which I mean not merely a chronological ordering of the material, but some attempt to fit it into the history of ideas.[10] As far as English is concerned, this would mean, for instance, studying the cultural debate described by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961). The anti-scientific, or more precisely anti-technological, attitudes characteristic of modern anti-utopias, can be traced

[9] In *Milton's God* (1965) Empson recalls a controversy about *1984* in the *Critical Quarterly*, to which he contributed. In the Spring issue of 1959, Richard Gerber wrote of Orwell's novel: "On the surface it is doubtlessly a savage political satire in which the individual is opposed to the party collective. But there is more than this, for the individualistic, rational, liberal and humanist conception of man is opposed not only to party collectives, but also to the complete unconditional religious surrender to the transcendental, paradoxical nature of God. It almost seems as if Orwell... had filled his political satire with unconscious or half-conscious meanings of a different kind.... *1984* has the age-old symbolic structure, and even phraseology of resistant man's breakdown and conversion to some power which we generally call by the name of God."

Empson agreed with the analysis, but indignantly denied that the underlying theme was either paradoxical or unconscious: Orwell *meant* to equate totalitarianism and Christianity.

[10] Kateb's book does this very well, incidentally, but its argument is largely speculative and abstract. It is more of an original contribution to the utopian tradition than a historical study of it.

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L. S. E. MONOGRAPHS ON SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY. 21 *April* 485 19538 0 35*s*

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directly to the running critique of industrialised mass society conducted by literary intellectuals in the 19th century. There is an obvious continuity between John Ruskin protesting that the Wye valley was being desecrated by a railway viaduct in order that a Buxton fool might find himself in Bakewell and a Bakewell fool in Buxton at the end of twelve minutes, or Arnold saying:

> Your middle class man thinks it the highest pitch of development and civilisation when his letters are carried twelve times a day from Islington to Camberwell, and from Camberwell to Islington, and if railway trains run between them every quarter of an hour; he thinks it nothing that the trains only carry him from an illiberal, dismal life at Islington to an illiberal, dismal life at Camberwell; and the letters only tell him that such is the life there....

and Aldous Huxley saying in an essay in 1931:

> the more travelling there is, the more will culture and way of life tend everywhere to be standardised and therefore the less educative will travel become. There is still some point in going from Burslem to Udaipur. But when all the inhabitants of Burslem have been sufficiently often to Udaipur, and all the inhabitants of Udaipur have been sufficiently often to Burslem, there will be no point whatsoever in making the journey... the two towns will have become essentially indistinguishable.

Wells, in contrast, is entirely representative of the progressive utopist in rejoicing in the possibilities of fast and comfortable travel in his *Modern Utopia*, while taking its benefits more or less for granted.

Studying this tradition of cultural criticism reinforces the mythical analysis sketched above, because most of the writers in it have believed either implicitly or explicitly in the idea of a Second Fall. That is, some cultural shift or historical event—the Reformation, the Renaissance, Romanticism, the Industrial Revolution, Christianity itself—fatally warped the development of mankind. To those who believe in the First Fall (*e.g.*, T. E. Hulme) the Second was a blasphemous and doomed attempt to deny its effects. More commonly, the Second Fall is regarded as the more significant, or the only real one. But its consequences are deplored through the evocation of a largely mythical "prelapsarian" past—the organic, agrarian, instinctual community, variously located in 18th-century England, the Middle Ages or primitive tribal life, but usually having overtones of the Biblical paradise. This perspective is not limited to pessimistic, conservative anti-utopians, because the optimistic utopist can suggest ways of exploiting developments in knowledge to restore the prelapsarian paradise. Hence William Morris' quaint fusion of Marxism and medievalism in *News from Nowhere*. Hence Claude Lévi-Strauss' confessedly "utopian" vision of a world in which automation would free man to enjoy all the advantages of primitive life and none of its disadvantages:

> ... the conversion of a type of civilisation which inaugurated historical development at the price of the transformation of men into machines into an ideal civilisation which would succeed in turning machines into men. Then, culture having entirely taken over the burden of manufacturing progress, society would be freed from the millennial curse which has compelled it to enslave men in order that there be progress. Henceforth, history would make itself by itself. Society, placed outside and above history would be able to exhibit once again that regular and, as it were, crystalline structure which the best-preserved of primitive societies teach us is not antagonistic to the human condition.[11]

It will be noted that this passage echoes, in its play on "men" and "machines" the passage quoted earlier from *The First Men on the Moon*, and offers a solution of the contradiction Wells got into. The utopianism of McLuhan has a similar appeal, carrying us forward and backward at the same time. The electronic age achieved by technological progress redeems us from the Second Fall of Gutenberg, and restores to us the oral-aural-tactile unified sensibility of primitive man by converting the world into a global village. In *Eros and Civilization* (1955) Herbert Marcuse likewise relied on technological progress to free mankind from the burden of the tragic paradox perceived by Freud: that the price of civilisation is repression.

Finally (although this is far too big a subject to be more than glanced at here), the criticism of utopias must recognise that there have been two major, sustained attempts to create Utopia in modern history, and both have left their mark on literature. The first was America, and the second the Soviet Union.

In a large, quasi-metaphorical sense all significant American literature is utopian in spirit, and saturated in the myths of paradise lost or regained, either celebrating the potentialities of the American Adam, or brooding over where he went wrong. I don't know enough about Soviet literature to say whether there is any correspondence there, but it seems plausible. At any rate, modern utopias and anti-utopias tend to be modelled on, or projections of, either

[11] *The Scope of Anthropology* (Cape, 1967).

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the United States or Soviet Russia. (*Brave New World* and *1984* are particularly pure examples.) Whether one takes an optimistic or pessimistic view of the future today, therefore, depends very much on whether one regards the American Dream and the Russian Revolution as experiments that have failed or experiments that are still in progress. In due course we may expect to see Mao's China appearing as the model for new utopias and anti-utopias.

Left, Right & Other Stereotypes

At the Court of King Consensus — By Rudolf Klein

THE BRITISH TRADITION of political comment is one of sturdy, down-to-earth commonsense. Its practitioners, like their master Bagehot, tend to be wary of abstract ideas, rely for illumination on quarrying history for precedent rather than on principle, and are interested in what is possible rather than what is desirable. It is a complacent tradition. Its belief in the basic rightness of the British political system has been frayed but not destroyed by recent experience and its vocabulary belongs not so much to the world of intellectuals as to that of practical men of affairs.

Mr. Brittan, by contrast, is an intellectual. He is an economist who has ignored the demarcation rules—academic and journalistic—by writing about politics. When he sees that the Emperor is naked, he says so—instead of taking refuge in describing the processional route, the order of precedence among the courtiers and the intrigues that decided the date of the occasion. Moreover, he has the rare gift of indignation: rare in that those who write about politics professionally tend to take the pathological condition of their subject for granted.

Far from being the dispassionate intellectual looking at politics from somewhere on high in the clouds, Mr. Brittan is putting politics on the rack precisely because the system condemns the intellectual to playing the fool at the court of King Consensus: to being a half-comic, half-tragic figure on the margins of action, commenting on the proceedings rather than taking part in the drama. The book[1] is a cry of protest and is important because Mr. Brittan's sense of exile is widely shared and equally widely resented.

The real starting-point of the book comes, I suspect, two-thirds of the way through. Here Mr. Brittan expatiates on the plight of what may be loosely called the classical liberal whose ideas cut across the symmetry of party politics. He is against the war in Viet Nam and in favour of libertarian social reform on matters like divorce and abortion: this brings him into line with the Labour Party. But he is also against paternalism in economic matters: this brings him into line with some Conservatives.

So the author (and Mr. Brittan, in this context, is something of an Everyman figure whose perplexities reflect those of a great many "liberal intellectuals") is forced to exist in a kind of political no-man's-land. He cannot identify wholeheartedly with either party, and indeed suspects organised parties as such because in the last resort they are based on authority rather than the free play of ideas; as a result he feels himself to be something of a political outsider:

> There are, for example, many gatherings attended by those interested in economic policy, from private parties to formal meetings, where there is a predominantly right or left-wing flavour in the room. The real embarrassment arises not for someone known to be on the other side, but for someone whose loyalty is felt to be uncertain or ambivalent.

It is a view which, as a political journalist without party allegiance and as someone who would probably agree with Mr. Brittan on most issues, I find only too easy to understand. But the temptation to adopt an anthropomorphic approach to politics, to evolve a political system designed to resolve one's personal moral or emotional dilemmas, is as dangerous as it is comprehensible.

Mr. Brittan, for his part, embraces the temptation joyously. For the aim of this book—an unconscious aim, no doubt—is to describe a political society fit for intellectuals to live in. (I hope this does not make him sound arrogant. On the contrary: his attitude seems to

[1] *Left or Right: The Bogus Dilemma.* By SAMUEL BRITTAN. Secker & Warburg, 25s.

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spring from the generous assumption that other people are as clever as he.) While he has little difficulty in demonstrating the extent to which both politicians and those writing about politics are the prisoners of their own clichés, he is less successful in claiming conviction for his own alternative.

THE BOOK'S CENTRAL ARGUMENT—which provides the title—is that the stereotypes of "Left" and "Right" are not only meaningless but positively damaging. To describe a man as belonging to the "Left" or to the "Right," Mr. Brittan argues, is to pin a label on him which provides little guidance as to his likely position on specific issues.

So far it is difficult to quarrel with the thesis. Every political journalist must be guiltily aware that he often uses "Left" and "Right" as a kind of lazy shorthand which may imply more to his readers than he actually intends—since he himself is usually conscious that this apparently neat classification can conceal a swarming horde of significant differences.

Again, Mr. Brittan's attempt to devise a new system of pigeon-holing is illuminating if not entirely convincing—though, to be fair, he himself doesn't claim that it is much more than an intellectual parlour game. Developing Professor H. J. Eysenck's ingenious scheme for classifying political attitudes by their *radicalism/conservatism*, on the one hand, and their *tender-mindedness/tough-mindedness*, on the other, he proposes a still more sophisticated system. Politicians, he suggests, should be classified by their leanings towards liberalism or authoritarianism, égalitarianism or élitism, radicalism or orthodoxy.

In lots of ways this is more illuminating than the conventional *Left/Right* classification. It brings out the finer shades. It shows that Harold Wilson and Edward Heath—though some way apart on *égalitarian/élitist* scale—have more in common with each other than they have with the extremists in their own parties—whether these be authoritarian-minded Marxists or authoritarian-minded Conservatives.

But it still isn't very satisfactory. Indeed as an instrument of prediction it is, in many ways, less satisfactory than the political correspondent's crude *Left/Right* classification. For example, in Mr. Brittan's system of classification, Roy Jenkins and Michael Foot appear to be first cousins as far as their attitudes are concerned. This is convincing up to a point, since on libertarian issues the two men tend to be on the same side. But it doesn't explain the fact that on a great many other issues dividing the Labour Party, they generally hold diametrically opposed views.

The weakness lies, I suspect, in the failure to cope with what may be the most significant dimension of all: the historical dimension. Even if two men share the same temperamental bias —even if they are both dedicated liberal, radical égalitarians—the expression of that bias is liable to be shaped by historical experience. Michael Foot is a man of the 1930s, just as Roy Jenkins is a man of the 1940s. Clearly someone whose views were shaped by the Spanish Civil War and mass unemployment is likely to behave differently from someone whose views were shaped by the Cold War and the problems of full employment.

But whatever the weaknesses of Mr. Brittan's own system—and he doesn't claim very much for it anyway—his main indictment remains: the accepted stereotypes of Left and Right have a distorting effect on the whole political system. Not only does this way of looking at politics, Mr. Brittan argues, encourage the easy, automatic dismissal of ideas simply because they are held by men at the extremes of the conventional spectrum. As a result, the intellectually soft-centred compromise views of the Centre are often accepted merely because they happen to fall between the extremes. But the *Left/Right* stereotypes encourage the parties to live up to them, to assume the roles which the words seem to imply for them. As a result, there is

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the frequently farcical pretence that policies themselves must conform to the stereotypes, that a policy is self-evidently wrong because it has come from the other end of the spectrum.

Once again there is a great deal in Mr. Brittan's indictment, but rather less than he claims for it—if one allows for the historical dimension. It's perfectly true that the Pavlovian reaction of political parties is, when an issue first comes up, to reject the view of the other side—or, for that matter, to reject the views of their own "extremists." Far too often policies are condemned not by argument but by pinning a *Left/Right* label on them.

But this, after all, is only the first reaction. What Mr. Brittan does not allow for is the gradual permeation of ideas. In practice, although immediate reactions may conform to the stereotypes—and may be influenced by them—long-term policies are not shaped by them to anything like the same extent.

To take only a couple of contemporary examples. The Labour Government, after recoiling with horror from the idea of "selectivity" in the social services, has in fact accepted it: the introduction of higher family allowances counter-balanced by lower tax allowances is at least a form of back-door selectivity. Equally it now looks as though the consensus of the Centre in favour of an incomes policy is being undermined by both the "Left" and the "Right."

Mr. Brittan, for his part, is contemptuous of such intellectual drift. Consensus, in his vocabulary, is almost a dirty word—a way of fudging issues and avoiding the need to face up to difficult decisions (*e.g.*, the front-bench consensus that Devaluation was the ultimate betrayal). As he sees it, the Labour and Conservative Parties both exaggerate irrelevant differences between them and avoid argument about real issues:

> This reluctance to engage in general argument, combined with the issuing of shopping-lists of unrelated policy points, has its roots in the two-party system and the mass electorate. Indeed it is a characteristic feature of duopoly in a market characterised by imperfect information. (Two rival department stores are more likely to be adjacent to each other in the High Street, rather than at opposite ends; and they are likely to copy each other's best-selling lines.)

The comparison is telling, and it's tempting to echo Mr. Brittan's conclusion: that the two-party system should be broken up and that there should be a more fluid political system—and leave it at that. It is certainly a view which has been encouraged by the failures, hypocrisies, and ritualistic battles of the present party system.

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UNFORTUNATELY, MR. BRITTAN is better at analysing weaknesses than at prescribing remedies. Some of these belong to the realm of wishful thinking: such as his hope for a cross-bench coalition which would allow more freedom of voting to the ordinary M.P. (though he can quite legitimately reply that this is to fall into the political commentator's habit of dismissing the desirable simply because it is unlikely to happen—a sure-fire recipe for never advocating anything at all).

Some of Mr. Brittan's other prescriptions could be directly counter-productive: notably his sponsorship of the proposal for primary elections to choose parliamentary candidates. This assumes that the result would be to produce cross-party voting by the enlightened. In fact it is just as likely to produce cross-voting by the unenlightened. The evidence of the public opinion polls suggests that there is a permanent, all-party majority *against* the kind of libertarian social reforms which Mr. Brittan himself thinks desirable.

But these are only quibbles. The real objection to Mr. Brittan's approach cuts deeper. It is that he seeks to impose a subjective view of political rationality on a system shaped by historical and social forces which cannot just be dismissed simply because some of their consequences prove to be unpalatable.

Here the single most important fact is surely that, for the great majority of people, politics is a very marginal activity. The level of information of the average voter is abysmally low; so is the level of interest, elections apart. Moreover, this is a perfectly rational attitude (however patronising it may sound to spell the point out). For most people the cost of obtaining the extra information needed to cast an informed vote is not matched by any likely gain he can make—as Anthony Downs, another economist to have turned his attention to politics, argues in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Harper & Row, 1965).

To acknowledge this is also to acknowledge the "two-audiences" problem. There is the *élite* audience which, by and large, wants the kind of open dialogue which Mr. Brittan wants to promote; and is resentful of a basically paternalistic process of decision-making which often reflects inherited historical patterns. And there is the "mass electorate" which lacks the knowledge, sophistication and, in all probability, the desire to join in any kind of open-ended dialogue.

IN THE PAST the *élite* audience was, in a very real sense, part of the governing system—socially and educationally. The new phenomenon—which accounts for much of the current sense of dissatisfaction and the attacks on what used to be called "The Establishment"—is that of the extra-mural *élite*: the growing number of those who feel themselves, by right of their educational or professional status, entitled to a place among the governors but find themselves, instead, among the governed. Hence, perhaps, the vogue cry for more "participation"—essentially, I would guess, the aspiration of an expanding, frustrated *élite*.

It is obviously a perfectly legitimate aspiration which cannot be ignored. But the danger is that, in seeking to satisfy it, the requirements of a minority may be projected on to a majority which has quite different needs. To deny the faults of the party system would be foolish. But it has more virtues than its critics are prepared to concede. Party labels are, admittedly, a crude form of shorthand and can, at times, be positively misleading (as the history of the present Government has amply demonstrated). But, as I have suggested, the historical and social experience which has shaped the parties has also shaped the attitudes of voters. Hence there is a kind of rationality, though not Mr. Brittan's, in voting for parties because of their prejudices: for abjuring the free-play of intellectual argument in favour of settling for the animal you know and whose instincts you share. Paradoxically, too, the politics of the "stereotype" may even increase the scope for the kind of policies which Mr. Brittan favours: a great many Labour voters, for example, were in favour of the Suez enterprise—but accepted their party's opposition to it because the "stereotype" as a whole satisfied them.

For the minority of intellectuals (including some who would recoil from this description) the politics of the stereotype are distasteful. But they are not perhaps quite as damaging as Mr. Brittan implies, though it would be insufferably complacent to pretend that much of his criticism doesn't stick. Opinions and policies do change. They often change painfully slowly and sometimes too late. Indeed this is probably inevitable, given a profoundly conservative society. If the intellectual is condemned to be the fool at the court of King Consensus, he can at least console himself with the thought that he is an influential fool (at least in the long run). Mr. Brittan has certainly been influential in his role as an economic commentator. Perhaps he will be equally influential in his new role as a political commentator: for he has written a book which is always illuminating even if it is sometimes wrong-headed, and which should command respect for its generosity of mind even if its conclusions are rejected.

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Philosophy & Sanity

Nietzsche's Titanism — By ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

WHEN NIETZSCHE finally became insane in January 1889, he wrote to Jacob Burckhardt,

> *Dear Herr Professor,* when it comes to it I too would very much prefer a professorial chair in Basle to being God; but I did not dare to go as far in my private egoism as to refrain for its sake from the creation of the world.

Is a letter like this merely a comic symptom of a tragic mental condition? Was Nietzsche's madness as irrelevant to the interpretation and truth or falsity of his theories as Marx's carbuncles or Darwin's gastric pains are irrelevant to the understanding and evaluation of their theorising? Or was Nietzsche's madness perhaps in some way the outcome of thinking Nietzsche's thought?

When a philosopher's life is relevant to the understanding of his philosophy, a special interest attaches to the work he did *not* publish, to first drafts, to notes and jottings. So it is with Pascal and so pre-eminently with Nietzsche. Between 1883 and 1888 Nietzsche kept notebooks on theories which he hoped to embody finally in a book called *The Will to Power,* perhaps sub-titled *Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values. The Antichrist,* written in 1888, was for a time thought of as the first of four books of a work to have the latter title. But in 1888 he abandoned the project of *The Will to Power.* When after Nietzsche's death his nasty sister, Frau Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, published her collected editions of Nietzsche's works, she included successive versions of a book made up out of Nietzsche's notes which she entitled *The Will to Power* and represented as Nietzsche's crowning achievement, as the final version of his "system." She thus falsified in three ways simultaneously: she represented as being in finished form and as intended for publication what were private drafts and notes; she gave the impression that the stylistic form which derived from their being notes was an intentional aphoristic device; and she presented the material in an order that was hers and not Nietzsche's.

To restore the original order would be difficult, and perhaps impossible. Nietzsche did not fill his notebooks systematically. So the text as given in the 1911 edition can be used, provided one remembers its provenance. But Walter Kaufmann has now produced an English translation (in collaboration with R. J. Hollingdale)[1] which is also a masterly re-edition of the whole. There is no edition of *The Will to Power* in German which matches Kaufmann's beautiful, devoted and scholarly work. Here, so far as is possible, we have Nietzsche himself. What do we have?

THE FOUNDATION OF Nietzsche's doctrine was a profound philosophical conception, derived partly from Kant and Hume, partly from Protagoras and Heraclitus.

> Logic is bound to the condition: assume there are identical cases. In fact, to make possible logical thinking and inferences, this condition must first be treated fictitiously as fulfilled. That is: the will to logical truth can be carried through only after a fundamental *falsification* of all events is assumed... (512).

That is, we can only reason on the assumption that the same object or event can be clarified and classified by means of the same descriptive expression; but in fact, so Nietzsche tells us, following Heraclitus, everything changes and nothing remains the same, there are no like cases, and therefore the assumption on which all reasoning rests is false. This scepticism is of course self-defeating; speech itself, and not only reasoning, presupposes a universe of stable persons and objects. Were the world what

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[1] *The Will to Power.* Trans. by WALTER KAUFMANN and R. J. HOLLINGDALE. Edited with commentary by W. KAUFMANN. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 65s.

Some aspects of this review are discussed this month in "Column," pp. 45–47.—*Ed. Note.*

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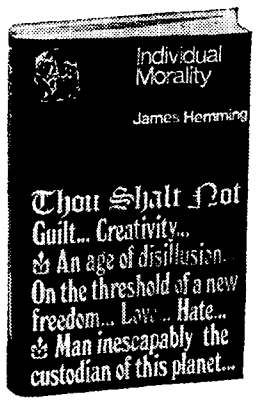
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Nietzsche takes it to be, meaningful speech would be impossible and so this scepticism could not itself be meaningfully stated. In expressing such a scepticism, therefore, the sceptic is found to presuppose the falsity of what he is announcing. Yet the temptation has been persistent in the history of philosophy to envisage a gap between the forms of speech and reasoning and the formlessness of a reality which speech and reasoning aspire to grasp, but must falsify. If Nietzsche in being seduced by this image has many predecessors, he made use of it for distinctive purposes of his own.

The most important of these also seems at first sight to embody a contradiction. For he wishes to use this general scepticism to underpin a more particular scepticism about all systems of moral values; yet the point of this sceptical enterprise is to introduce a new system of values. The transitions from a spirit of corrosive scepticism to one of intense affirmation are difficult enough to make at the level of style; at the level of argument surely Nietzsche must once again be involved in inconsistency? I believe that he is, but that the inconsistency was one not private to Nietzsche's thought, but central to the culture of which he was a part and against which he was trying to revolt. We can identify this inconsistency in a number of writers, but most clearly perhaps in one of Nietzsche's most hated and despised targets, Kant.

KANT, AS NIETZSCHE SAW, was a representative German figure. (Nietzsche believed that Locke and Hume were "too bright, too clear" for the Germans, and that epistemological doubts had to be clothed in a sufficiently convoluted style to be acceptable in Germany; it is a pity that Heidegger in writing about Nietzsche has never considered what Nietzsche would have said about Heidegger.) He rightly connects Kant's morality with that of Rousseau, although also understanding its native German provenance. The central notion of Kant's moral philosophy is that of a moral law which every rational being utters to himself. This law is unconditionally binding upon all rational beings and what it enjoins us to is the doing of our duty for no other motive than that it is our duty; we must not obey the precepts of the moral law out of interest or in the pursuit of happiness. Furthermore, our knowledge of the moral law is prior to and independent of our knowledge of the divine will; we are in fact able to judge that what God commands is right only because we have an independent moral view of what rightness is. At the centre of this autonomous morality there lies the notion of a body of precepts which have the force and

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authority of law, but which no one utters to us except ourselves. But how can I be the author of the moral law? How can any body of precepts which I utter to myself be unconditionally binding upon me?

It is not just Kant who poses this problem, but the whole liberal individualistic tradition. If the individual is made sovereign in the realm of values, if everyone has the right to declare what principles have authority over him, then what authority do any principles have over anyone? To put this problem in another way, can the scepticism which liberalism turns against its predecessors be prevented from corroding liberalism too? The liberal refuses to treat the divine commandments as a final criterion in moral matter; the divine commandments must themselves be justified by reference to *his* criterion. But what about the ultimate criteria of the liberal? They are simply to be affirmed or chosen; there is no further justification, for all attempts at rational justification, such as the Kantian do in fact fail. Here Nietzsche's critique of liberalism begins.

I have already suggested that Nietzsche reproduces within his own standpoint the same contradiction on which liberalism founders. That he did not perceive this was perhaps partly due to his fastening upon the false objectivism of liberalism as one of its vices. Liberalism, like Christianity, like (according to Nietzsche) socialism, degrades the strong individual by imposing on him an allegedly objective scheme of values. The content of this scheme is bad in several respects. The appeal to selflessness is an appeal to the qualities of the unsuccessful and the defeated; the appeal to an idealised view of human nature obscures what men are actually like; the appeal to human equality expresses both an attack upon and a parasitism upon the strong. But this false scheme of virtues is indicated by Nietzsche not only for its content, but also on account of its form, of its claim to authority as a scheme of *the* virtues.

Yet although Nietzsche offers sceptical arguments against the false objectivism of such moral philosophies as those of Kant, of Rousseau, and of the Christians, what he offers himself is surely offered as a rival scheme of *the* virtues. Indeed Nietzsche's virtues are often recognisably as traditional as those which he condemns: the virtues of courage, loyalty, and self-affirmation are indeed only recognisable by us—or by Nietzsche—as virtues because of the part these dispositions have played in human life. (It is also relevant that Nietzsche's recognition of these as only aristocratic virtues, as class virtues, runs counter to our historical experience of the importance of these virtues to men as men.)

6

essays east and west.....

Ian Hamilton's selection of lively, lucid essays from *The Review* appears under the title **THE MODERN POET** (35s) *The Review* is the most important of today's poetry magazines, and the essays are by the best and most influential of today's critics including A. Alvarez, Donald Davie and Christopher Ricks. The TLS has called it "the best guide available to recent poetry". British and American poets including Thom Gunn, Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell are discussed with "the rigorous approach of Scrutiny" (Bernard Bergonzi)

While *The Review* is freely circulated in the uncensored West, Mihajlo Mihajlov's **RUSSIAN THEMES** (42s) has brought its author a four year prison sentence which he is currently serving in Belgrade for the essay "Why We Are Silent". His voice, said the TLS, "is one speaking to us from the bottom of the test tube of reason, much as Dostoevsky's man challenged reason from his underground". He is "an able and discerning critic" (Sunday Times) of Russia's leading young writers struggling for expression in a Communist society

NB What Kenneth Allsop has called "an important historical monument" will be completed on 24th April, publication day of Henry Williamson's **THE GALE OF THE WORLD** (30s) fifteenth and final volume in his great panorama of English life, *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight*

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But why should we treat these virtues as having any more of a claim on our moral allegiance than the virtues which Nietzsche rejected? Nietzsche's answer is that we shall find a reason in the way these virtues are affirmed by a new form of culture-hero, the superman, whose will to affirm will triumph.

IF MY ARGUMENT IS CORRECT, then the Nietzschean hero turns out to be a particularly loud-mouthed and effective moral subjectivist in a culture of moral subjectivists created by that very liberalism which it is the task of the Nietzschean hero to overcome and transcend. That an argument as subtle and sophisticated as Nietzsche's does issue in such vulgarity receives some confirmation from the fact that he was half prepared to treat Napoleon as a hero. That a mind as splendid as Nietzsche's should reach so banal a conclusion is perhaps a further sign that it was the dilemma of a whole culture and not merely a private problem with which he was struggling.

WHAT IS SPECIFICALLY Nietzschean is the heroic dimension which Nietzsche's version of the struggle against the dilemma of moral individualism exhibits. The notion of a transvaluation of values by an affirmation of the will does imply a more-than-human act of creation. This requirement suggests two comments on Nietzsche himself. The first is that, although his hostility to anti-Semitism, to pan-Germanism and to all those lumpen-proletarian tendencies of which Hitlerism was the expression makes the charge that he was the direct ancestor of Nazism one that is in any crude form false, he does license a moral titanism which is all too vague in content and was all too easily put to the service of Nazism. Nietzsche would have disowned Nazism, but he cannot entirely disown intellectual responsibility for making the ideological task of the Nazis easier.

Moreover, the prophetic task of the transvaluation of values is one only to be undertaken by someone whose sense of his own mission is at least on the scale of those who taught that they were sent by God or spoke with His voice. Nietzsche was all too uneasily aware of the scale of his own claims and that this belonged to the nature of his task and had nothing to do with questions of personal vanity. When it came to it, he would very much have preferred a professorial chair in Basel to a task that carried with it the danger of self-deification. But he did not for that reason refrain from trying to create a new moral world; and in so doing perhaps destroyed his own power of reason.

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Letter from Hong Kong

By Stanley Karnow

SINCE LAST JUNE, over a hundred corpses have washed ashore on to the beaches of Hong Kong and Macao, the Portuguese enclave on the edge of China. Evidently swept to the sea down the Pearl River, swollen by torrential rains this summer, these bodies all appeared to be victims of violence despite their various degrees of decomposition. A few were headless, some showed traces of gunshot wounds, many were mutilated, and most had their hands trussed behind them, suggesting that they might have been executed in oriental style by decapitation or a bullet in the back of the neck as they knelt.

Such a spectacle would have caused a sensation three or four years ago, when the Communist regime in Peking, whatever else was thought of it, at least enjoyed the reputation of having imposed law and order on China for the first time in a century. Now, in contrast, the sight of these corpses has merely served to corroborate the thousands of accounts reaching here of the turmoil triggered throughout the country by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which Mao Tse-tung initially launched as a drive to purge the ossified Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy and which has, during the past eighteen months, degenerated into a bitter, bloody, confused series of power struggles. And these struggles, while officially depicted by Mao's publicists as salutory symptoms of "class conflict," have not only surfaced the deep hostilities that have long nagged the Communist Establishment but, at the same time, they have brought into the open a vast variety of clan and family feuds, regional rivalries, economic troubles and social tensions that reveal the extent to which the New China resembles Eternal China.

References to the turbulence are aired regularly in turgid *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* editorials that warn of "class enemies" engaged in "civil wars" or "last-ditch fights" against the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Unlike a few years ago, when there were supposedly no criminals—or flies—in China, provincial newspapers currently appeal for vigilance against murderers, arsonists, thieves, speculators, hooligans and other "bad elements," while local radio broadcasts describe public trials and executions of "counter-revolutionaries" accused, curiously enough, of the same destructive activities encouraged by Mao and his wife, Chiang Ching, in their original exhortations to the Red Guards in August 1966. Tales of unrest are also told by refugees escaping to Hong Kong, and in letters to Chinese residents here from relatives back home. One of these letters, received not long ago by a Chinese acquaintance of mine from an uncle in a Kwangtung province town, illustrates a common technique for camouflaging a bit of news among conventional phrases, just in case the censor peeks. In part, the letter read:

> The principles of the Cultural Revolution in *X* are good, but in the past two months there have been serious armed fights here, and both land and sea communications were blocked. Several hundred persons were killed and over two thousand houses were burned. People fled to *Y* [a mountain area]. The sound of guns could be heard at night, and we were alarmed for our safety. But the revolutionary road of Chairman Mao will triumph, and the evil capitalists and conservatives will soon be defeated.

A touch of poignant intimacy was conferred on these tales one morning a few months ago when an *amah* who works for us melted in tears. She had received a letter the day before from her brother, a farmer in a coastal province, informing her that his eldest son, a boy of seventeen, had disappeared while working in the fields near their village. She went on to disclose that her brother, to whom she sent regular cash remittances, had been denounced by Red Guards as a "rich peasant," and she feared that her nephew could have been kidnapped and killed to punish the family. As she told the story, it occurred to me that this was the first time in the eight years she has been with us that I had seen her weep.

A BROADER AND MORE DETAILED VIEW of the ferment inside China has been provided, however, in the profusion of unofficial

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tabloids, tracts, and pamphlets published by Red Guard and other activist groups in the provinces. These crudely-printed, mimeographed or handwritten papers are smuggled into Hong Kong by merchant seamen and other travellers or, more frequently, mailed anonymously by Chinese to their relatives here. Within the past year, Peking has executed one man and jailed another for life for sending "unauthorised" journals abroad, and a recent *People's Daily* editorial hinted that severe measures might soon be enforced against "some comrades" who spread "grapevine news" and release "confidential Party and State information." But the Red Guard publications continue to flow out.

A network of Hong Kong dealers corners the incoming papers, selling them for prices ranging from ten to a hundred dollars to Western diplomatic missions, journalists, and scholars. The biggest buyer is the United States Consulate-General, whose large staff of experts screens and publishes translations of the papers in its *Survey of China Mainland Press*, a daily brochure considered to be the single most important source of raw material on China at the moment. Paradoxically, the foreign diplomatic community in Peking, confined as it is to a ghetto existence, relies heavily on the *SCMP* for its information about provincial conditions. The Russians also seem to make use of the translation service to mobilise polemical arguments against Mao. It is sometimes startling to read a Reuter's or Associated Press dispatch from Moscow containing a Soviet revelation of a Chinese event that was originally published by the American Consulate General here.

Interest in the Red Guard tabloids and tracts, though limited to specialists, is nevertheless so keen that counterfeiters have inevitably emerged. Employing sleazy paper and ink imported from China, some of them can produce forgeries that are technically and stylistically brilliant. An unusual document purported to have come from Canton late last year, for instance, disclosed plans by the Chinese High Command to increase the strength of the People's Liberation Army by 600,000 men. It was eventually judged a fake by experts who traced its singular typeface to an obscure printer's shop in Macao. Also regarded as suspicious—for its tone rather than typography—was the text of a talk delivered by Mao to a group of African visitors to Peking, in which he portrayed himself as a lonely, misunderstood genius surrounded by adversaries. Accurate as that analysis of his position may be, the experts doubted that Mao would have unburdened himself in such a manner to foreigners.

Generally, however, the difficulty in observing China through these throwaway sheets stems less from their questionable authenticity than from their hyperbole. For the Red Guard writers, while dealing with actual events, have a way of embellishing their prose with purple passages and irrelevant adornments that border on the absurd. Thus an account of a skirmish between opposing factions features such lines as: "Fire! Fire! Fire everywhere, as fierce flames and dense palls of smoke rose high in the sky, and the crash of collapsing buildings mingled with piercing cries for help...." Similarly, an indictment against certain "class enemies" in Canton last month claimed that they had stolen items ranging from automatic weapons to ration coupons for the Shaho Ice Cream Parlour, while charges against individuals are not only smothered in invective but assert lengthy lists of past misbehaviour that reflect on the "true revolutionaries" for having failed to detect them earlier. It is somewhat bewildering, therefore, to learn from a tract that Wu Chuan-pin, once a prominent Kwangtung province student leader, is now an "overbearing and arrogant scoundrel" and a "counter-revolutionary double-dealer" who has long been involved in espionage. The tract, perhaps more plausibly, also blamed Wu for sexual promiscuity with Chungshan University co-eds and this, in addition to his other crimes, it alleged, has "left a big stain on his moral character."

Propaganda & the Free Press

SOME OBSERVERS HERE submit that many of the verbal attacks against personages like Liu Shao-chi, China's much-denounced head of state, and other foes of Mao are, in reality, devious propaganda manoeuvres contrived by their supporters to gain them popularity. This is not impossible, for it is hard to imagine how publicists could have expected to tarnish Liu's image by damning him, as they have, for advocating higher wages for workers, more freedom for peasants, and other "revisionist" policies. Indeed, there is a good deal of evidence indicating that Liu, a grey, faceless figure, has only become well-known in China since the campaign to defame him began early in 1967. His recent "expulsion" from the Party has probably not diminished his popularity as the man who fought against Mao's rigorous threats. In the same way, considering the earthy tastes of the average Chinese, there seems to be an oblique hint of admiration for old Marshal Ho Lung, another of Mao's enemies, in the colourful diatribes that assail him for having staged luxurious banquets and, among other naughtiness, dallied with five concubines simultaneously.

But cutting through their exaggerations and inflated rhetoric, these flimsy tabloids are signifi-

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cant for two reasons besides the information they impart. In the first place, their parochial outlook is, in a sense, testimony to China's change during the Cultural Revolution from a highly-centralised state to a federation of more or less autonomous regions. Secondly, the fact that they are published by rival factions in the same area underlines the degree to which the breakdown in the regime's political control of the country has inadvertently given China the first free press it has had in decades. As a consequence, it has been possible to follow with some measure of impartiality the clashes and rivalries that have shaken China over the past year or two. Among the most vivid of these were the battles that raged last spring in southern Kwangsi province, which borders on North Viet Nam. Accounts of the fighting there filled the pages of *Angry Waves of the West River*, the organ of a faction called the "April 22nd Grand Rebel Army," and *Voice of the Proletarians*, published by its main adversaries, the "Alliance Command."

While the Chinese share a common history and a subjective feeling of national identity, their land in many respects resembles a continent rather than a unified country. Regions are not only separated by huge distances—Canton is farther from Peking, for example, than Rome is from Stockholm—but also by their spoken languages, customs, and other cultural peculiarities. Thus the stormy conflicts that rocked Kwangsi province are more a sample of the sort of turbulence than typical of the turmoil generated by the Cultural Revolution. As described in the area's local tabloids, however, they offer both an insight into the quality of the ferment and some basis for generalisations about the troubles that have been tearing at other parts of China.

"*Ins*" & "*Outs*"

A SUBTROPICAL REGION of bizarre, conic-shaped hills rising from fertile valleys, Kwangsi has, like other Chinese frontier zones, traditionally shown unstable tendencies. It was here that the mystical Taiping rebels started their sweep across south China in the 1850s. Later in the 19th century, the province was a cockpit for European imperialist competition as the British moved down from Hong Kong to set up river trading stations at Wuchow and Nanning, and the French, their missionaries in the vanguard, pushed up from Indochina. Kwangsi's remoteness was further complicated by the special complexion of its population, which includes a large minority of Chuangs, a short, stocky mountain people more akin to the Thais and Shans than to the Han Chinese. The Chuangs now comprise about a third of the region's population of 20 million and unlike the Hans in the area, who are mostly urban merchants, workers, and state officials, they are peasants who cultivate their hillsides by destructive slash-and-burn farming methods. When the Communists took control in Peking in 1949, they embarked upon a special programme to bring Kwangsi into the national fold by sinicising the Chuangs. This led to ethnic friction that undoubtedly contributed to the social explosion that upset the region as it was overtaken by the Cultural Revolution.

Kwangsi had been managed since 1954 by Wei Kuo-ching, a veteran Red Army officer and Party *apparatchik* who served as both the provincial political boss and military commander. Himself a Chuang, Wei had apparently lagged behind in carrying out Peking's *mission civilisatrice* among the natives, for in 1957 an outside functionary named Wu Chin-nan was sent into the province to speed up the assimilation process. Wei presumably resented this intrusion and thus there was, even before the Cultural Revolution, latent tension in the area. In January 1967, when Mao urged his partisans to assault Communist Party bureaus throughout the country, Wu Chin-nan mobilised some forty thousand Red Guards in Nanning, the Kwangsi capital, to oust Wei and his entrenched associates. Jockeying to defend his apparatus while seeming to obey Mao's directive, Wei resorted to a tricky tactic. He dissolved his old Party machine and proclaimed himself the head of a new Maoist-style committee, in effect grabbing power from himself. But Wu and his Red Guards, detecting this transparent operation, accelerated their offensive, and the two sides polarised. Wei's group, supported by the provincial army garrison and the local Party apparatus, called itself the "Alliance Command" while Wu's self-styled "revolutionary rebels" founded the "April 22nd Rebel Grand Army" on 22 April 1967.

Reflecting similar struggles elsewhere in China between the "ins" and "outs," the rival factions in Kwangsi attacked and counter-attacked each other during most of 1967, their battles ending inconclusively and blending into fresh turmoil. At one point, Wei was forced to appear at a public rally in Nanning and confess his "sins." Finally, in November, as moderate military and civilian leaders in Peking gained the upper hand and initiated efforts to restore order, both Wei and Wu were summoned to the capital to agree on an "immediate cessation of violence" in their province. Yet even as they signed this accord, their supporters back in Kwangsi continued fighting and in

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February, another agreement was reached, specifying among other points that "no mass organisations will beat up, arrest or kill people" and that both sides would surrender their weapons to the Kwangsi garrison. The fact that Peking had to negotiate these accords between rival provincial factions reflects the extent to which the central government lacked the authority to impose its will on the country. The fact that these accords were promptly disobeyed also reflects the depth of the chaos at the regional level.

Judging from the accounts of both protagonists, their cease-fire agreement broke down because the pro-Establishment "Alliance Command" would give its opponents only a minor voice in provincial affairs, while the "Grand Army," regarding itself as Maoist rebels, refused a subordinate position. On 20 April 1968, virtually declaring war on the "Grand Army," Wei Kuo-ching issued a communiqué stating that "we shall not be soft or hesitant in dealing with the enemy [and] we shall not rest until complete victory is won."

WITH THAT, A ROUND OF BATTLES opened in Kwangsi's principal cities. At Liuchow, the factions bombarded each other with cannon and, if all the details in the Red Guard tabloids can be believed, more than a thousand buildings were destroyed and over a hundred participants were killed. Meanwhile, at Wuchow, according to a "Grand Army" account, the fighting raged from mid-April until late May, ruining two thousand buildings and rendering forty thousand people homeless. During one period in the fighting, the account claimed, 317 bodies were dumped in a local cemetery and uncounted others were thrown into the West River. The account also asserted that hundreds of prisoners taken by the "Alliance Command" in the fighting were summarily executed, and it is believed that their bodies, carried along by the floods that hit south China last summer, are those that eventually were washed ashore in Hong Kong and Macao. In a post-mortem report on the Kwangsi uprising, the defeated "Grand Army" estimated that fifty thousand of its members were massacred and another twenty thousand had fled to the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan, Kweichow and Kwangtung, adding that the "fascist atrocities" committed in Kwangsi were "even worse than those of the Kuomintang and the Japanese devils. . . ."

Casualty statistics of that magnitude certainly lack credibility, yet even knocking off a zero, as analysts usually do when confronted with Chinese numerical estimates, leaves some notion of the devastation that probably occurred. Over a year ago, Lin Piao, the Defence Minister and Mao's chief adjutant, hinted at the extent of the tumult in a private talk designed to assure a group of Red Guards in Peking.

> There are casualties in all revolutions [Lin said] so let us not exaggerate the seriousness of this situation. Many people have committed suicide or been killed. But these deaths are fewer than those incurred during the Japanese war and the Civil War, or in natural calamities. Thus our gains are greater than our losses.

Lin's remarks were made, however, before the severe clashes that rocked most of China in August 1967, and they did not, of course, take into account the disorders that shook Kwangsi, Kwangtung, Fukien, Yunnan and other southern provinces last spring. Besides taking lives, these outbreaks have been part of the wider confusion that has severely disrupted almost every sector of Chinese public and private life. Industrial production, hit by strikes and transport difficulties, is estimated to have fallen some fifteen per cent in 1967, while foreign trade is currently running about twenty per cent below last year's level, which were record lows. Agriculture has fared better, yet the breakdowns in bureaucratic controls have prompted peasants to hoard or black-market grains, cotton, fibres and other produce normally earmarked for the state. The economic trouble, combined with political tensions inside the Chinese scientific community, has retarded the country's nuclear and advanced weapons programme by one to three years. Universities and secondary schools, suspended two years ago in order to liberate the Red Guards, have not yet resumed classes. With only one ambassador functioning abroad—in Cairo—Peking has virtually abandoned relations with foreign nations and Communist parties. Its only ally is Albania and even its ties with North Viet Nam, a recipient of Chinese aid, are said to be frayed. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party, once the principal nation-wide political and administrative apparatus, has been decimated by purges that have left only 36 of its 93 Central Committee members and 5 of its 28 provincial First Secretaries still active.

Perhaps most important, if impossible to quantify, the upheavals, bloodshed, and humiliation experienced by millions of Chinese have apparently created a mood of hatred and a desire for vengeance that threaten to strain the country's social texture for years to come. In his recent book, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, Professor Lucien Pye of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has pointed to the emotional component contained in Chinese political culture, which has traditionally operated on the basis of "domination and submission"

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rather than "conciliation." The Communists channelled this emotion into campaigns of hostility against "landlords" and "rich peasants" or against "U.S. imperialism" and "Soviet revisionism," just as Mao utilised passions when he unleashed the Red Guards to carry out their reign of terror against alleged "bourgeois and reactionary elements." The likelihood that the victims of this terror or their families will forgive and forget is as remote as the prospect of our *amah's* brother pardoning those responsible for the disappearance and possible death of his son, if he ever discovers them.

Industrialisation vs. Tradition

TO ATTEMPT to fathom the causes behind these cataclysmic events, it is necessary to appreciate the condition of China and the personality of Mao, their meeting in history and their impact on each other. For the relationship between the charismatic leader and his society is at the core of the Cultural Revolution, which, despite its devastation, seems to me to have been launched for "pure" motives but in an almost totally unrealistic fashion.

First, consider China in the early 1950s, after the Communists had taken power. Its population was then close to 600 million and growing at the rate of twelve or thirteen million per year. Yet only about eleven per cent of its land was arable, and this narrow area, chronically plagued by floods, droughts, dust storms and insect invasions, had long ago reached the limits of its productive capacity under the traditional system of labour-intensive agriculture. As a result, it has been calculated, China's per capita food consumption had probably declined since the mid-19th century, and its potential for producing the raw materials necessary for industry was restricted.

Challenged to transform China into a modern state, the Communists had a choice in those early years. Had they been "agrarian reformers," as many observers initially thought them to be, they might have emulated the experience of Japan, which in the 1880s had emphasised the introduction of Western technology to agriculture. This would have required extensive popular education as well as significant imports of chemical fertiliser, seeds, livestock for breeding, and farm tools. Literally, it would have meant building from the ground up; development, even if it ultimately matched Japan's present success, would have certainly been a long process. The Chinese, partly actuated by doctrine and partly by impatience, chose instead to subordinate agriculture to heavy industry. Or, as Mao put it, without iron and steel China would be "like a fat man—all flesh and no bones. . . ."

With that, the Communists embarked upon their first Five-Year Plan in 1953 in dazzling style. The great factory centres in Manchuria were reconstructed and expanded, and an ancient town like Loyang was turned from a sleepy market-place into a smoky industrial city eight times its original size, its suburbs sooty with tractor, ball-bearing and steel plants, its population a babel of Cantonese, Szechuanese, Mongolian, Honanese deliberately mixed, as a visitor observed, "like chemicals in a test-tube." In one booming town, a British traveller found workers at their lathes while bricklayers were still erecting the factory walls. All this energy and enterprise did indeed succeed, by 1957, in astonishing industrial growth, creating the impression that the Chinese were well on their way to miraculous accomplishments—until the cost of the whole drive was examined.

Though the Soviet Union was at that stage providing blueprints, technical personnel and low-interest loans for China's industrial development, an estimated 97 per cent of the capital for investment came from the Chinese people themselves, and the heaviest burden fell upon the shoulders of the peasants. They were expected to produce the raw materials for industry, grow food for an expanding urban population, and yield additional surpluses for export to earn foreign exchange or to service debts to Communist-bloc creditors. Furthermore, the peasants were expected to perform this feat on a negligible fraction of the development budget. In 1956 and 1957, for example, less than two million tons of chemical fertiliser were made available to peasants, and its distribution was carefully aimed at industrial crops like cotton rather than cereals. Those who sought fertiliser for their grain were told to be self-reliant. As a high-ranking agriculture official advised: "I think of the stomach of every man and of every animal as a small fertiliser factory. . . ."

For centuries, the Chinese peasant had ingeniously cultivated his tiny farm with small inputs of capital and tremendous expenditures of labour. The Communists sponsored a similar concept, but instead of employing the family as a productive unit, they believed that they could increase labour efficiency through collectivisation. But without technology, this approach served largely to reduce incentives. Peasants resisted collectivisation and production suffered. In the summer of 1957, while industrial output was breaking records, agriculture had failed to register adequate progress, and the authoritative *People's Daily* wrote: "If we cannot contrive a way for the state to buy more grain, we are heading for a future full of trouble."

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IT WAS AT THIS POINT that the Communist leaders entered into an internal debate on policy. Presumably there was opposition to continued collectivisation from such figures as Marshal Chu Teh, the venerable "father of the Red Army," Marshal Peng Teh-huai, then Defence Minister, and Premier Chou En-lai. In the light of later events, it is worth recalling that Chou had frankly expressed his views on collectivisation to a visiting Indian delegation which had toured China a year earlier. The Indian report noted that Chou referred to "some enthusiasts who wanted bigger and better cooperatives," but he himself had serious doubts because "there was a possibility that this might lead to a lack of initiative on the part of individual workers and working teams and hence be detrimental to efficiency." But Chou and his more pragmatic associates were over-ruled by Mao and the "enthusiasts," who probably included Liu Shao-chi, then the heir apparent, and Teng Hsiao-ping, the Communist Party Secretary-General. Their solution to China's dilemma was to mass the peasant population into huge collectives, a plan that led, somewhat haphazardly, to the ambitious "Great Leap Forward," in which Mao put into action many of the ideas he had been evolving for years.

Moralism and Modernism

IN CONTRAST to the image of him as a philosopher-king often projected in the West, Mao is actually a Spartan who has consistently emphasised strength, courage, and martial spirit as the instruments of national salvation. The heroes of his youth were the bandits of his favourite novel, *Water Margin*, or misty historical giants like George Washington. Only a few years ago, in fact, he told a visiting French delegation that while Robespierre had been a great revolutionary, he was personally more impressed by Napoleon. These attitudes gradually crystallised into a set of principles during his beleaguered days in the caves of Yenan in the mid-1930s. There, as Professor Benjamin Schwartz has pointed out, Mao evolved his concept of guerrilla warfare not simply as a military strategy but as a form of social organisation. In place of institutions, bureaucracies, experts and sophisticated equipment, absent in Yenan, Mao put a premium on enterprise, improvisation and self-sacrifice. Moreover, he came to believe, the all-for-one-and-one-for-all feeling that inspired guerrilla fighters could be applied on a national scale to a society whose main resource was its people. Thus Mao developed the notion during those years in the wilderness that poor, isolated Yenan was China in microcosm—just as he would later regard China as Yenan in macrocosm.

But the "Yenan spirit" was never fully shared by all of Mao's colleagues, despite the mythology prevalent for so long that the Chinese Communists were a monolith. As the military establishment expanded, for example, its officers began to advocate specialisation, acquiring in the process a professional outlook that differed radically from Mao's ideal of the flexible, eclectic guerrilla leader. This trend became particularly pronounced after the Korean War, in which Chinese soldiers exposed to American military technology decided to modernise their army along Soviet lines. Similarly, as the Communists extended their hold over wider areas of China, a new generation of recruits was attracted into the Party less from political than career motives, and these cadres tended to focus more on achievement than ideology. Like their military counterparts, they also learned that a complex, modern administration could not be managed merely by mouthing Mao's moralistic slogans.

WHATEVER RESERVATIONS these elements had towards Mao's policies were submerged by nationalism during the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s and 1940s and later during the Korean War. Mao succeeded, too, in rallying support from his upper echelons for the "Great Leap Forward," which started in early 1958 as a scheme to mobilise manpower to bring in a good harvest and soon escalated into a gigantic programme purported to modernise China overnight. Shunted into 24,000 "people's communes" with an average membership of 5,000 households, peasants were put to work digging irrigation ditches and reservoirs, ploughing, reaping and simultaneously producing "native steel" in primitive village furnaces. By the end of the year, the country was exhausted, and a period of bad weather that followed caused famine in several regions. People starved to death in chronically impoverished parts of Kansu and Shantung. Malnutrition was widespread even in Kwangtung, the rich rice-growing province adjacent to Hong Kong. One survey published in a confidential military bulletin revealed that ten per cent of troops in the First Army reported "unnatural deaths" in their families during the 1960–61 winter.

It is now clear from the verbiage that has emerged in the Cultural Revolution that the failure of the Great Leap severely jolted the Communist leaders, prompting several of them to shift from latent to active resistance against Mao. The Defence Minister, Marshal Peng Teh-huai, is believed to have gone to Nikita Khrushchev to seek support and later, at a

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Party Plenum in mid-1959, openly criticised Mao's radical policies. Mao arrayed enough backing to purge Peng; but other senior members of the Communist hierarchy such as Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping switched from supporting Mao to opposition against his rigorous fundamentalism. Employing a tactic that the Chinese have used against their emperors for centuries, they glorified Mao while undermining his real authority and reversing his visionary programmes. Among other measures, they eased restrictions on peasants, permitting them to cultivate and sell vegetables and livestock privately. They also encouraged a degree of liberalisation in education, and they took a more tolerant attitude towards dissent. Indeed, looking back on this hollow exaltation of his personality, Mao said afterwards that "they treated me with the respect shown for a deceased father at his own funeral. . . ."

Isolated yet undefeated, Mao counter-attacked. He appointed Lin Piao to the post of Defence Minister to replace Peng, thereby capturing control of the army, which he proceeded to shape into a "model" through a sweet-and-sour approach of concessions and intensive political indoctrination. He also launched a "socialist education" drive designed to arrest the "spontaneous tendencies towards capitalism" spreading among the peasants and, among other things, discipline Party cadres who were backsliding into the corrupt, imperious ways of mandarins. But this effort, with all its slogans and meetings, failed to halt the unravelling process that was taking place, and by the summer of 1964, Mao was clearly worried by the trends he observed. He even expressed his concern to foreign visitors like Edgar Snow and André Malraux. One thread that ran through his talks with them was his anxiety that he would die—he was then nearly seventy-one—before he could satisfactorily mould his "revolutionary successors." Thus he was already beginning to think about a final, drastic revolution which would, as he later put it, touch people "to their very souls."

WHILE HE WAS BASICALLY FOCUSED on China's domestic situation, there is no doubt that the American bombings of North Viet Nam and the arrival of U.S. combat troops in South Viet Nam lent a certain urgency to Mao's anxieties in early 1965. For these developments provoked a debate within the army over possible defence postures. It revealed to Mao that despite Lin Piao's overhaul of the Chinese military establishment, many senior officers, among them the Chief of Staff Lo Jui-ching, favoured an "active" strategy. This strategy, with its emphasis on modern equipment, smacked of the very professionalism that Mao considered to be contradictory to the concept of the "people's war" he had evolved in Yenan. More than a few Chinese officers also probably argued for some kind of *rapprochement* with Moscow in order to acquire Soviet nuclear protection for China. This must have nettled Mao, who regards the "revisionists" as far worse than the "imperialists." It is likely as well that in September 1965, when he tried to initiate a new campaign to "criticise bourgeois reactionary thinking," Mao was dismayed to find his Politburo comrades generally cool to the idea of a dynamic "class struggle" exercise at a time of potential danger from the American forces in Viet Nam.

The Explosion of Freedom

INSTEAD OF restraining Mao, these internal and external factors strengthened his conviction that he was, as he told Malraux, "alone with the masses." Suspicious of the Party, he narrowed his circle of supporters down to a handful of trustworthy associates such as Lin Piao, his secretary Chen Po-ta and, of course, his wife Chiang Ching. Wary of the leadership group in Peking, he retreated to Shanghai, where he commissioned a young literary critic, Yao Wen-yuan, to fire the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution in an article attacking an historical play that, Mao believed, deviously criticised him for having dismissed the former Defence Minister, Peng Teh-huai. Much later, in August 1966, Mao would again seek backing outside the hostile Party apparatus by unleashing the Red Guards, the "little generals" who neatly fit into the old man's dream of bringing up "revolutionary successors."

Until the emergence of the Red Guards, the Cultural Revolution seemed to be a case of major yet limited surgery of the Party. Figures like Lo Jui-ching, the Chief of Staff, and Peng Chen, the high-ranking Politburo member, disappeared along with dozens of lesser *apparatchiks*; still the purge was largely selective. But after 18 August 1966, when the young Red Guards were unleashed at a mammoth rally in the capital, the Cultural Revolution rapidly degenerated into an orgy of violence. Gangs of adolescents burst into the streets of Peking and other cities, breaking into homes to smash heirlooms that symbolised "feudalism," burning foreign books, beating old people designated as "bourgeois reactionaries," and humiliating officials, school-teachers, artists and others arbitrarily branded as "capitalist-roaders," "revisionists" or whatever. One sight among the hundreds reported by European and Japanese

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correspondents was the spectacle of a celebrated Peking opera singer forced to wear a dunce-cap and stand on a stool in a public square as she was taunted by a band of young people that included her own daughter.

This reign of terror was justified in propaganda by Mao's dictum that "destruction must precede construction," and the extraordinary phenomenon of gratuitous persecution has given rise to various explanations. Professor Lucien Pye has stressed the point that the Communists, playing on deep-rooted emotions of hostility in Chinese society, purposely promoted "hate" campaigns to arouse popular passions against landlords, rich peasants, Kuomintang agents, and other real or imagined enemies. Writing recently in *The China Quarterly*, Philip Bridgham linked the Red Guard violence in mid-1966 to "a compulsion to repeat the past, an attempt to re-create the heroic, formative period of the revolution...." A graduate of Peking University who personally experienced the upheaval has advanced the notion that political, economic, educational, and even sexual pressures had been building up for years among young Chinese, and these were finally released in an explosion of freedom that included the freedom to wreak havoc.

ALMOST ALONE AMONG Mao's associates, Premier Chou En-lai strove to keep the young within bounds. He admonished them for their indiscriminate attacks on Party headquarters, warned them against destroying factories and other means of production, and recurrently tried to prevent them from clogging the country's fragile railway system. Throughout the fall of 1966, however, Mao and his Cultural Revolution Group were contrastingly staging rally after rally in Peking, exhorting millions of Red Guards to carry on their crusade against "enemies of the people." Dramatic as all this movement was, it lacked direction until January 1967, when Mao issued a new order to "seize power" from provincial Party bureaus across the country.

According to Mao's concept, his so-called "revolutionary rebels" were supposed to overthrow the existing authorities and set up new structures modelled on the Paris Commune of 1871, allegedly the Marxist-Leninist ideal. In practice, this scheme was a massive miscalculation. Nowhere did it fail as spectacularly as in Shanghai. There, Mao had expected, his radical activists would be strongly supported by the multitude of contract and temporary workers as well as unemployed or under-employed labourers who had grievances against the economic system controlled by the old Party machine. But instead of falling into line behind the Red Guards when they grabbed power in Shanghai in their "January Revolution," the workers went on a rampage of demands for shorter hours, higher wages, welfare benefits, and the like. When the revolutionaries rebuffed these demands, the workers staged widespread strikes, stopping railway traffic and paralysing the harbour. Peasants poured into the city to complain about their living conditions; public order broke down; and Shanghai was a shambles.

The "Paris Commune" idea was scuttled, and Mao came up with fresh measures. He called on the Army to lend its support to his partisans; and to replace the abortive Shanghai model, he decreed that "triple alliances" be formed in which the Red Guards and other radicals would share power with officers and acceptable Party cadres. From Mao's viewpoint, however, this scheme proved no better. Unable to distinguish a genuine from a fake "revolutionary rebel," the Army simply repressed anyone who seemed troublesome. Moreover, local commanders anxious to avoid turmoil and keep their regions running normally turned to experienced Party and government officials for assistance, thereby rehabilitating the very bureaucrats Mao hoped to eradicate. Observing this trend towards moderation with alarm, Mao curbed the Army's authority in April 1967; and, at the same time, he set in motion a new revolutionary offensive with a *People's Daily* editorial denouncing Liu Shao-chi as the "top Party person taking the capitalist road."

Clashes erupted almost everywhere in China as Mao's radicals again sought to seize power. At this stage, though, assorted Red Guard and other activist groups splintered into rival factions, some of them backed by regional army garrisons. This was the case in the Yangtze River industrial complex of Wuhan, where the commander, General Chen Tsai-tao, favoured a movement called "The Million Heroes" against a competing coalition of students and workers that claimed to have Mao's approval. When Mao sent a pair of emissaries to Wuhan to investigate the problem, General Chen had them kidnapped and beaten. This, in Mao's eyes, amounted to mutiny. His wife, Chiang Ching, exhorted an audience of Red Guards to "take up arms to defend yourselves"; and the journal *Red Flag* appeared with an appeal for a purge of the Army.

THOSE SIGNALS STIMULATED the Red Guards to embark on another revolutionary upsurge, and during the month of August 1967 they carried the Cultural Revolution to its peak of violence. They looted arsenals, stole weapons from soldiers, and fought pitched battles against their adversaries or amongst themselves nearly

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everywhere in the country. Swept along in a destructive momentum that no longer seemed to have any ideological rationale, extremist factions in Peking also stormed and burned the British Chancery in Peking. China's cities were on the edge of anarchy; the Army, which had hitherto attempted to restrain agitators more by persuasion than coercion, was finally authorised to shoot at trouble-makers. Possibly under pressure, Chiang Ching reversed her earlier exhortation. She now pleaded for calm and discipline. What conceivably occurred, it appears in retrospect, is that a junta of senior officers allied with civilian leaders like Chou En-lai announced to Mao that he had no choice but to halt the turbulence. Always aware of the necessity for a tactical retreat, Mao apparently heeded their counsel while awaiting a chance to counter-attack later.

Chinese Pragmatism?

THROUGHOUT THE WINTER of 1967–68, conforming to the letter if not the spirit of the Cultural Revolution, Army commanders and remnant Party officials proceeded to set up Revolutionary Committees to govern the provinces. These committees were supposed to be "triple alliances" composed of military, Party, and radical representatives. In reality, they were dominated by local officers and veteran cadres dedicated to restoring "law and order." This conservative trend eventually alarmed Mao, and he reacted. In early spring, he issued an ambiguous "instruction" warning against a "Rightist" revival, thus actuating the Red Guards to rise again in a new revolutionary offensive that led to devastating battles, particularly in south China. These battles, unlike the turmoil of a year earlier, were characterised in several areas such as Kwangsi and Kwangtung by rather brutal military repression. By midsummer, moreover, the Army and its civilian supporters began to make institutional changes. They dissolved Red Guard groups, sent thousands of youths off to rural regions to "learn from the peasants," and filled schools and universities with disciplinary platoons of soldiers and workers suitably labelled "Mao Tse-tung's Thought Propaganda Teams." The doctrinal justification for this counter-revolutionary thrust has been the line, issued as a directive by Mao, that "the working-class must exercise leadership in everything."

Senior Chinese officers evidently realise that military control is only an expedient. The Army, comprising fewer than three million men, is too small to direct a population that may be close to 800 million. In addition, soldiers lack the skills to manage a large, complicated government. As a consequence, the moderates appear to be seeking ways to reconstruct the shattered Communist Party structure by using the Revolutionary Committees as the foundation of a revamped national organisation. This process is challenged by a dual danger. A new Party that includes the Red Guards would be unstable from its inception; but to exclude them would further exacerbate the frustrations of millions of youths who were politically awakened during the Cultural Revolution and are demanding channels of expression. At the same time, there is the constant possibility that Mao, as long as he lives, will again urge the young activists to "regenerate the revolution" in the hope that he can subvert the Army's transparent effort to betray his ideals. Mao has already indicated his troubled concern with the present temperate mood. In a statement issued in mid-October, he has insisted that a new Party apparatus must be infused with "fresh blood."

OVER THE LONG TERM, it seems plausible to predict, Peking will see the emergence of "pragmatic" leaders focused primarily on the enormous problem of transforming China into an effective state by practical rather than visionary means. This suggests the possibility of economic incentives and less fractious foreign relations. It suggests, too, the likelihood of greater decentralisation, leading China towards a sort of federal system that conforms more realistically to the country's size and diversity. For the present, however, the prospect of rational development is blocked by a single hurdle—Mao himself. Until he passes from the scene, the pendulum will probably continue, as it has for years, to swing between stability and disorder.

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LETTERS

Hochhuth & the Truth

JOHN WEIGHTMAN is, I think, entirely right about the central issue of *Soldiers* [ENCOUNTER, February]. I would, in fact, carry his principle further than he does. "He [Hochhuth] may suppose that Churchill is already public property and part of history, so that it doesn't much matter what variations on the myth playwrights present us with." I can't see why our responsibilities to our fellow humans should be subject to any time-limit, other than the limits of history itself.

The imaginative writer, unlike the historian, has to fill in gaps with invention, and express definite conclusions without definite proof. But if he tells lies on purpose, he has impoverished and warped the common store of truth, and everyone reached by his work will be that much the worse for it.

There does not exist, in any context, a higher truth than truth; truth is indivisible and interdependent. Attempts to bend it, in order to promote the author's attitudes, are often revealing of a lower truth he did not intend; they also produce something less subtle, less complex and less interesting than what really happened. As long as real people are being used, his job is to interpret, not to rearrange them.

Shakespeare's history is often at fault; but his greatness is the product of belief. If he had any hand in the nasty propagandist job on Joan of Arc in *King Henry VI*, he could have no juster punishment than the quality of the play.

MARY RENAULT

Cape Town

Whose Wittgenstein?

ADAM KASIA suggests that I comment on his statement that my account of Wittgenstein's philosophy does not agree with Stephen Toulmin's account of it [ENCOUNTER, January].

His letter really raises two distinct questions. First, did I imply something which Toulmin clearly denied, *viz.* that Wittgenstein was a positivist? Secondly, did Toulmin imply something which I clearly denied, *viz.* that Wittgenstein did *not* intend that the theory of factual propositions which he published in the *Tractatus* should be applied to empirically based factual propositions?

The answer to the first question is that I explained something which must be familiar to all readers of the *Tractatus*: though Wittgenstein said that religion and morality could not be expressed in factual propositions, he did not think that there was nothing in religion and morality, and so, in that sense, he was not a positivist. I suppose that my quoted remarks, taken by themselves, might seem to suggest that I attributed to Wittgenstein a positivistic intolerance of everything that, according to him, cannot be expressed in factual propositions. But restored to their context—a discussion of the theory of factual propositions of the *Tractatus*—they do not even seem to carry this suggestion. In fact, I denied the validity of this interpretation of the *Tractatus* more than once.

Toulmin's letter implies that the answer to the second question is also negative. There is really no doubt at all that Wittgenstein did intend that the theory of factual propositions of the *Tractatus* should be applied to empirically based factual propositions. But the precise way in which this application was to be made—a subject discussed by Wittgenstein with the philosophers of the Vienna Circle—was neither part of the theory itself nor required by the argument for the theory. His idea was that the theory could be deduced from certain very abstract, general properties of factual discourse.

Toulmin's letter raises a further question. He now states that there is a difference between our interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy at a deeper level. He implies that I presented Wittgenstein as "an honorary Englishman of eccentric and original genius . . . etc.," whereas he sees him as "an absolutely first-rate but thoroughly representative Viennese neo-Kantian of the early twentieth century . . . etc." Of course, the contrast between these alternatives really is the key to Toulmin's article. I suppose that, if I had chosen between them, I would have formulated them in a rather different way. But there is no need for me to go into that. The only thing that I need to do is to record the fact—which ought to be recorded here, since my article appeared elsewhere—that I did not treat them as exclusive alternatives, but if anything, combined them.

DAVID PEARS

Christ Church,
Oxford

The State of Scotland

MR. IAIN HAMILTON'S interesting survey of the growth of Scottish nationalism [ENCOUNTER, February] concludes with the judgment that "the war that began in 1914, was resumed in 1939, [and] swept away the conditions in which Scotland *as a nation* could continue to flourish as an integral part of the United Kingdom." It seems, however, that as a separate nation Scotland could survive now only if some other country paid for much of its defence-system, its research and technology. Mr. Hamilton does not mention the fact that the Scottish National Party, recognising Scotland's financial limitations, wishes to cut the defence allocation from, roughly, £200 million to £70 million per annum. Sovereignty is all very well; but in this case its prerequisite is surely massive aid, promised in advance. Would Mr. Nixon oblige?

I am the opposite of Mr. Hamilton; an Englishman who has spent a good part of the last twenty-three years in Scotland: Scottish-London instead of London-Scottish. I agree with him that the U.K. political parties cannot hold Scotland unless there be Home Rule (some system far beyond Mr.

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Heath's "declaration of Perth"). But is he correct in imagining that "the social, moral and cultural crises of England have no counterpart north of the Border?" I suggest that life is much the same in Coldstream and Berwick-on-Tweed and will shortly be so in Thurso and Penzance. Certainly the Scots must take a stronger hold of their own land, but not, one hopes, by virtue of a surrealist myth—namely that constitutional divorce in 1969 promotes national integrity.

CHARLES JANSON

London

Pop Sense and Nonsense

A Reply to Henry Pleasants — By COLIN MASON

NOTHING discourages the dedicated prophet of doom.... Forever warning us of the imminent extinction of "serious" music, is the American Henry Pleasants, who is back again in the February issue of ENCOUNTER with an article entitled "Who's Afraid of Pierre Boulez?"[1]

This is partly about the Beatles, but those who are old enough to remember what the world was like before the Beatles appeared may remember that in 1961 Mr. Pleasants published a book called *Death of a Music?* with a generally similar but in one important detail different argument. Then we were going to be wiped out by jazz. Now it is pop that is going to put paid to the "conspiracy" of serious music.

In eight years there have of course been changes, and one of them that is easy to see from Mr. Pleasants' change of ground—though it does not seem to occur to him—is that it is not serious music but jazz that is going down as pop comes up, just as the waltz was edged out by jazz—while serious music goes its own course, only marginally affected by these changes among its poor relations.

In using this deliberately offensive term I am only responding to the provocation of Mr. Pleasants' pretence that there is no difference of artistic quality between good serious music and good pop or light music. Hierarchies exist. *Die Fledermaus* is a perfect work, unsurpassable in its genre, but who would suggest that it is on the same level as *The Marriage of Figaro, The Mastersingers* or *Falstaff*? *Du bist die Ruh* is a masterpiece of art, but the "Unfinished" Symphony is an even greater one. And although one might concede that the Velvet Underground's "Sister Ray" is an exhilarating experience... anybody who has attentively listened to and looked at Stockhausen's "Mikrophonie II," heard in London recently, will recognise that this is a work of greater artistic substance and significance.

The cockeyed vision that prevents Mr. Pleasants from seeing these elementary facts leads him into various other errors and fallacies. Winding up with a purple flourish, he speaks of "a degradation and debasement of art, a mortification of the senses, a mockery of intelligence, a repudiation of the spirit and a celebration of impotence and impudence unexampled in the annals of mankind." This is meant to be an attack on contemporary "serious" music, but whatever justification there may be for it in that field, it is surely even more applicable to most of the spate of mindless pop music.

Stockhausen is a particular object of Mr. Pleasants' indignation, and to support his attack he calls on many real and supposed allies, including me—though it is true that he regards me as a pussy-footed friend. In fact I must decline the honour of being on his side at all. In suggesting a year ago that we should perhaps find some other name than "music" for what Stockhausen has created in works such as "Momente," "Mikrophonie II" and "Hymnen" I was certainly not suggesting that it was not "serious" art.

Unable to understand or respond to this new art except with rage, Mr. Pleasants seeks to apply commercial criteria in support of his case—a dangerous manoeuvre, though one that we need not try to rescue him from. For even on these grounds Stockhausen easily survives. He has not made as much money as the Beatles, but he is greatly in demand all over the world, and fills concert halls everywhere. And his publishers no doubt also find him a good investment—as do those of many other living "serious" composers, of varying degrees of "modernity," from Stravinsky, Messiaen and Britten to Cage and Bussotti.

According to Mr. Pleasants this is all due to a "conspiracy to defend the faith" on the part of the professional music establishment, the effect of which has been not so much "to preserve art from commercial pollution" as to "secure social sanction for a condition of non-competitiveness, for communicative failure and, indeed, for the renunciation of any communicative responsibility."

THERE IS A TINY SPECK of truth in this, recalling Stravinsky's comment about the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations "buying up surplus symphonies as the government buys up surplus corn." But Mr. Pleasants sees in it a more sinister intent—"the stemming of the Afro-American tide." He even seeks to excuse his false eight-year-old prophecy about the future of jazz, and to explain its displacement by pop as the music that will lay the ghost of "serious" music, by suggesting that jazz was "too black."...

The simple truth is that Mr. Pleasants doesn't like modern music. In this many will sympathise with him, without falling into the fundamental error on which his ludicrous theories and arguments are

[1] Mr. Mason's critique of Henry Pleasants' article in the February ENCOUNTER appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* (London), which also published, in part, Mr. Pleasants' reply.

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based, that pop or any other kind of entertainment music can replace it. Pop music fulfils a useful social function well, but it is not the function of "serious" music, which is to be listened to. Pop music, like jazz, can be heard with enjoyment in many circumstances, but it has too little content to bear "serious" listening. For that purpose, "serious" composition, however remote from the "music" of old, will continue to be needed, demanded, supplied and enjoyed, at first by a few and later by many—the familiar process that is already happening to Stockhausen as it has already happened in this century to half a dozen of his forbears who are now classics.

*

COLIN MASON'S REFERENCES, to me and to my article, "Who's Afraid of Pierre Boulez?" contain so many mis-statements and so many inaccurate attributions that I cannot let them pass unchallenged. I welcome dissent. But I do think that those ideas and assertions of mine that excite opposition should be represented fairly and accurately by those who propose to attack them.

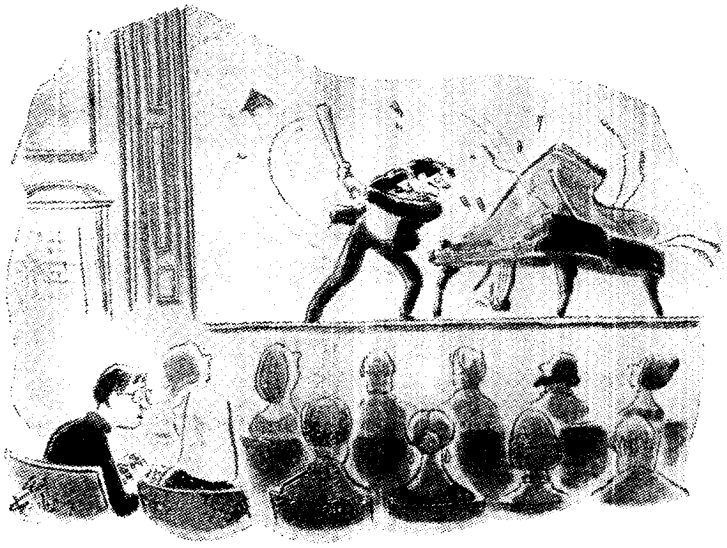
Mr. Mason's reference to me as "a dedicated prophet of doom . . . forever warning us of the imminent extinction of serious music," and his further reference to my "false eight year-old prophecy about the future of jazz," sent me back to my *Death of a Music?* (1961). There, speaking of prophecy, I find, on pages 138–9, the following:

> "To some of us the picture may seem clear enough: a glorious European tradition coming to an end, its close coinciding with the emergence of an American tradition now approaching something like maturity. But habits, customs and associations are too deeply ingrained in our collective musical thinking, and probably just as well. The implications of this picture are too momentous for too many people, and too disturbing. The serious musician is not prepared to admit that it is all up with the music to which he has devoted his life and his affections. Nor need he do so. There will be a great audience for the masterpieces of European music for many years to come.
>
> "We may expect no sudden change in society's attitudes toward these two musical idioms. Jazz will doubtless continue to be regarded, patronisingly, as popular, regardless of its quality, and new music conceived as serious will continue to be taken seriously regardless of its sterility or essential triviality. . . . The element of tension derives from the jazz musician's desire to be taken seriously. If he persists in the notion that respectability and status can be acquired by studied originality, eccentricity, defiance of his listeners and the composition of twelve-tone jazz he will be ruined before his time has come."

I invite Mr. Mason, or anyone, to infer from this, or from anything else I have written, a prophecy of "the imminent extinction of serious music." And I invite any impartial reader, acquainted with what has happened in jazz in the past decade, to offer, in light of what I wrote in 1960, an assessment of Mr. Mason's assertion of a "false eight year-old prophecy about the future of jazz."

Mr. Mason refers to my having "changed ground on jazz" in favour of pop. I didn't change ground. The music changed. What happened to jazz is precisely what I said would happen if it pursued the course on which it appeared to be embarked in 1960. I am only reacting to history. What has confused the issue is the application of the term jazz to a succession of Afro-American styles, each covering roughly a generation: New Orleans, swing, bop and rock. Only with rock was the term jazz not carried over to the new style. Jazz, as bop, had become pretentious and "serious," and it went its own fateful way, while the continuity of the Afro-American idiom was assumed by rock, a blend of rhythm-and-blues, gospel song and country-and-western. Had I spoken of Afro-American instead of jazz there would have been no apparent change of ground. I foresaw the possibility of a jazz disaster. I did not foresee the fusion of the earthier styles, both white and black, in rock. Well, you can't win them all.

Next, Mr. Mason refers to "Mr. Pleasants' pretence that there is no difference of artistic quality between good serious music and good pop or light music." I have never pretended or said any such thing, and I never shall. What I have said, and shall say again, is that there is a difference of quality between good pop (or jazz or rock or whatever) and *contemporary* serious music. It is, I think, better.



"I don't like this tampering with the score. He should be using an axe."

Drawing by Ed. Fisher; © 1968. The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

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FINALLY, Mr. Mason says: "According to Mr. Pleasants, this is all due to a 'conspiracy to defend the faith' on the part of the professional musical establishment." And elsewhere he credits me with saying that "pop is going to put paid to the 'conspiracy' of serious music." I say no such thing. Nor does the word "conspiracy" occur in the ENCOUNTER article. Mr. Mason is drawing here on the chapter "The Critic" in *Death of a Music?* The pertinent sentence reads: "In effect, critic and composer are—as Virgil Thomson, in his time as critic of the New York *Herald Tribune*, suggested they should be—banded together as co-professionals in a conspiracy to defend the faith." The concept of a conspiracy was Mr. Thomson's, not mine.

In *Death of a Music?* I might add, I merely posed a question. Mr. Mason and some of his colleagues are now embracing an "art form" whose appeal, in Mr. Mason's own words, "is no longer primarily to the musical sense." Peter Heyworth, Music Critic of *The Observer*, in an article "The Fatal Sixties" in the June issue of *High Fidelity*, wrote: "To put it crassly, we are living in a period when one music is dying as another is in the painful process of birth." In other words, they would seem to be removing the question mark from my title and making a damned good prophet out of me!

I note in this morning's *Daily Telegraph* Mr. Colin Mason's approbation of a pianist who "strenuously lashed the insides of the piano with a cosh or whip" and of a bass player "who had his instrument lying across two chairs and, among many unorthodox ways of playing it, bounced small white balls on the body and rolled them down the fingerboard." Music? Art? Music Criticism?

HENRY PLEASANTS

London

Concerts

35 MIN. OF SILENCE PUT AUDIENCE "WITH IT"

By MARTIN COOPER

THE THIRD *of John Tilbury's "piano recitals" in the Purcell Rooms last night was a cosy, easy-going affair. It was patronised largely by the very young, who sat around and about apparently expecting nothing, which is roughly what they got.*

Cornelius Cardew's "Treatise" was 45 minutes of leisurely fiddling with electrical equipment, a vague slurry of industrial sound and the sort of noises that come out of a radio shop with a very young staff.

The Steinway was intermittently abused, once by having what sounded like a dentist's drill inserted into its mouth, but no one seemed to take much notice....

Finally, at the suggestion of Alvin Lucier ("composer") Mr. Tilbury had—or appeared to have—an encephalogram made, while the audience sat for 35 minutes in hushed silence, whether mystically communing, gullible, or simply passive, I should not like to say.

Then it was all over, an evening of unmitigated boredom for the uninitiated, and perhaps for the initiated too. After all, what's wrong with boredom as a non-reaction to a non-event?

DAILY TELEGRAPH

"McLuhanism"

ARNOLD ROCKMAN (Nov. 1968) should be disabused if he considers that "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" was part of Jesus' "new outlook." Jesus was simply quoting an essential part of his Jewish tradition which can be found in LEVITICUS *xix, 18*.

(Rabbi Dr.) DAVID GOLDSTEIN

London

"There was a Young Lady . . ."

LIMERICOPHILES EVERYWHERE must hail Nefastus Dies' penetrating essay, lightly woven across Baring-Gould's Breeches Bible, on the objects of their affection [ENCOUNTER, January]. I have to take him a little to task though. In one breath he deprecates slovenly foreign-printed anthologies, and in the next he reveals acquaintances with the work of "an American editor," identifiably Gershon Legman, without mentioning that this work, printed in Paris in 1953, is the biggest, best produced, and most scholarly book of its kind in existence. *The Limerick* embraces 1739 speciments (not counting variants), has indexes of both rhymes and names, and carries nearly 100 pages of fascinating and often hilarious notes. In the Good Old Days of the 1950s virtually every one of the the specimens was unprintable in the English-speaking world, and I used to augment my income by loaning out my own copy at exorbitant rates, cheerfully paid, but nowadays—well, you will understand my deep feelings against relaxation of censorship. An intimate knowledge of the mystic rapport between Young Ladies and ecclesiastics should not, I maintain, be all that easy to come by.

Legman himself is a Leavis purist in not recognising clean limericks, but really, it's hard to disagree with Nefastus Dies' contention that splendid examples of naturally clean, cleanish, and even laundered limericks abound. Two deserve special mention. One concerns the fast and famous Young Lady named Bright, usually attributed to ANON, but in fact a creation of Reginald Buller, a longtime professor of botany at the University of Manitoba. (Buller was widely believed to have made a big collection of hair-raising limericks, but I have had a good look through his posthumous papers, now in a special library in Winnipeg, without coming across a hint even.) And the other is Dylan Thomas' reference to a procedural detail in an encounter with a certain Young Lady of high estate. Singly, every word in this charming limerick is "innocent," and as for the totality, why, there's no offence i'th'world. But I guess it'll not be printed in England for many a year yet!

Ottawa,
Canada

N. T. GRIDGEMAN

Bullitt, Lenin, Brogan

MAY I CALL attention to what I believe are errors in D. W. Brogan's review of *William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union* [ENCOUNTER, November]?

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Evidently Mr. Brogan did not read with sufficient thoroughness my section dealing with the Bullitt–Lenin negotiations. For he dismisses Bullitt's remarkable achievement with a cavalier reference to "Bullitt's alleged deal offered by Lenin" adding, "to believe that Lenin and Trotsky meant what they said (if they said it)... is to insult two great men."

Had Mr. Brogan read the section with any care, he would have known why Lenin believed it in the Bolsheviks' interest to make peace with the Allies in 1919 as they had done a year earlier with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. Mr. Brogan would have known also that I differentiate between the positions held in 1918 and 1919 by Lenin and by Trotsky. To jumble the two men together is simply to misunderstand their views.

As for Mr. Brogan's suspicion that the Bullitt–Lenin negotiations might not even have occurred, I call his attention to page 194 in which I discuss Lenin's report to the Seventh Congress of Soviets in December 1919. Here Lenin referred directly to his negotiations with Bullitt and explained why he had agreed to peace terms.

Whether Lenin intended to adhere permanently to his promises is, as I suggested, a matter for speculation. That Lenin did, in fact, make the peace treaty with Bullitt is irrefutable.

I agree with Mr. Brogan: Bullitt was erratic and often wrong in his judgment. The treaty he negotiated with Lenin, on the other hand, was an important diplomatic development. Mr. Brogan's hostility to Bullitt should not obscure historical facts.

Seneca Falls, New York

BEATRICE FARNSWORTH

Ezra Pound

JAMES JOYCE was more fortunate in his friends than Ezra Pound in that they waited for some time after his death to make his personal life public.

Like Daniel Cory [ENCOUNTER, May 1968] I have also visited Merano and Venice and been given help in the study of Pound's London years by his family. On the fields at Pisa, where the detention camp had been during the war, local people confirmed many of the details of those cantos drafted there. When one has learnt to listen these are like a piece of music, working on the whole consciousness. To achieve this effect, a great compression of material has been necessary throughout the Cantos. If at times, as in *Finnegans Wake*, the words seem to "go asleep" it is because of the reader's own lack of equipment. As Proust wrote of Beethoven's quartets, a work of art has to create its own appreciators very slowly.

One Italian said to me, "Oh, Pound 'the mad poet' was here, was he?" He had read the work. "In a hundred years they'll realise what he's been saying."

PATRICIA HUTCHINS

Richmond, Surrey

AUTHORS

Norman Thomas di Giovanni was born in 1933, and has published his own work in the *Nation*, the *New Republic* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1965, after working with the Spanish poet Jorge Guillén, he edited a choice of Guillén's work in *Cantico: A Selection* (Atlantic and Deutsch). He has translated Cesare Pavese's later poems for *New Directions*, to appear this year, and he has been working along with Borges and a variety of translators in the method he describes, preparing Borges' *Selected Poems*, which will also appear in 1969. He is at present in Buenos Aires, working with Borges on further translation of him into English. The translators who have collaborated with him bear enthusiastic witness to his editorial energy and precision; and his close consultation with Borges himself has lent both felicity and authority to Borges' English existence....

Alastair Reid has lately been translating, besides Borges, the poetry of Pablo Neruda, Judas Roquín and Carlos German Belli. Some of his own poetry is shortly to appear in Spanish translation....

THE selection of **Borges** poems printed in this number, together with some ninety or so more translations, will be published late this year in a bilingual edition by Seymour Lawrence/Delacorte Press in the United States and by Jonathan Cape and Penguin Books in England....

Rudolph Klein is a political writer on the *Observer*....

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Paris

M. Beaujeu, *acting dean of the faculty of letters at Nanterre, today spoke of "terrorism" which a small group of agitators was creating at Nanterre.*

In a broadcast on the State radio and television service, and in a statement tonight in "Le Monde," M. Beaujeu told of violence and wanton damage caused by gangs, helmeted and armed with iron bars and stones, and of the building up of an arsenal of such weapons at the faculty.

Since November, he said, extremist students had developed activities of a kind not known during the student revolt of May and June. "Never then was a dean personally and physically molested, and never was a university building systematically attacked by students armed with iron bars."

After incidents last week seven students are in custody. M. Beaujeu has dismissed five of the "ushers," hired by the Ministry of Education to keep order in the university, for acts of brutality to students. THE GUARDIAN

London

Did Wordsworth *know the answer to the cannabis problem?*

He wrote in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads—

"A multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.

"The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are almost daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies."

These words are quoted in the Guy's Hospital Gazette before a leading article questioning the growth of cannabis smoking.

The article points out that the recent Wootton report did not consider why the habit has grown and suggests that this factor should be the basis of any consideration of the legality or illegality of the possession and use of the drug.

The article goes on: "Does the opening quotation still explain the frustrations of which this drug-taking would appear to be a symptom?

"If this is so, then the 'cure' of the syndrome lies much deeper in society than any piece of legislation can ever hope to reach."

EVENING STANDARD

Paris

M. André Malraux, *the Minister for Culture, was splashed with red paint when he arrived at Nice today to lay the foundation stone of a museum to house 68 religious works by Marc Chagall.*

The paint was squirted from a plastic flask by a painter named Pinoncelli as M. Malraux was getting out of his car. "I am a painter. This is a cultural act," he declared.

Seizing the flask, M. Malraux squirted it in turn so that both men became covered with red paint. M. Pinoncelli was arrested and M. Malraux, after washing his face, carried on with the ceremony.

M. Malraux said he would not sue his attacker. "It was an artistic and aesthetic dispute," he said cheerfully. He added: "I personally find it marvellous that one argues, even over Chagall."

THE TIMES

Paris

Words *are no longer a means of communication but a means of covering its absence. In France, for example, it was announced last spring that a* dialogue *at all levels would begin. The verb* dialoguer *promptly replaced* parler *in smart chat ("I've so enjoyed dialoguing with you"). The* dialogue *itself never began.* INT. HERALD TRIBUNE

London

The tragedy *of the* groupuscules *of the Left, in both France and Britain* [Alasdair MacIntyre *writes*], *is that every one of them has seen in the events of May a confirmation of his own analysis. The political weakness of the Left is very much bound up with this inability to* learn *from events; how can one learn, when every new event can be easily fitted into an unfalsifiable schematism? The urgent task is to ask what facts will determine which of alternative views is correct, or—if neither is correct —where the truth lies.*

"Where was Karl Marx when the Communards were dying on the barricades? In the British Museum scribbling!" ran one slogan painted on Paris walls. If we are not to have yet more fruitless deaths on the barricades, the comrades had better start revisiting the British Museum. NEW SOCIETY

London

There was a tiny knock *on the door, and the Inspector ushered into the kitchen Mr. Crossman and a figure I did not at first recognise, wearing a stand-in Jimmy Hendrix Experience-style wig and gold-rimmed dark glasses. "Good-day, Wedgie," cried Harold, "welcome to the think tank. Perhaps you would care for a cup of Mazawattee Pekoe Tips." "Thanks Man," replied Mr. Benn in a curious accent, making a lazy snapping gesture with his fingers, and accepting a Coronation Mug of the steaming orange brew. "The Tragedy of the Attlee Government," began Mr. Crossman, reading from an old copy of* Encounter *Magazine„ "was that it ran out of ideas, losing the ideological momentum that could have carried it through to victory in 1951...." "That's enough of that, Owl-eyes," exclaimed Harold sharply, "no one can ever accuse me of running out of ideas...."*

"Mrs. Wilson's Diary," *in* Private Eye

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(Sorry about the small type, but we want to tell you everything!)

In recent years you will have noticed a remarkable development in part-publishing—series which build up week by week to form complete reference works. Now, for the first time, this publishing technique is being used for classical gramophone records and their attendant literature. Pioneering this venture in the U.K. is Fabbri & Partners, associated with the famous Italian publishing house, Fabbri of Milan.

The General Plan

THE GREAT MUSICIANS is published in 84 weekly parts, starting on March 21st. Twenty composers will be represented: Monteverdi, Corelli, Pergolesi, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Dvorak, among others. Some composers will receive extended treatment (Beethoven, for instance, gets twelve parts), and in these cases the biographical and background material will be developed throughout the set. Special albums will be available for storing the parts as you buy them.

Presentation

Each issue of THE GREAT MUSICIANS will consist of a beautifully produced and illustrated 12-page book, containing biographical and background information on the week's composer and an analysis of a particular work. In a pocket at the back will be a sleeved 10" 33⅓ r.p.m. LP record of the chosen work. Included also is a weekly magazine called *Baton*, containing comment on the current musical scene and details of the week's special offer (see opposite).

The Performances

All the recordings will be by established orchestras (no pseudonyms!), and many well-known and up-and-coming artists will be represented. Most of the recordings will be taken from the established catalogue, but some will be made specially for the series.

Patrons, Advisory Editors, Writers

THE GREAT MUSICIANS is privileged to have as Patrons: Sir John Barbirolli, Yehudi Menuhin and Sir William Walton. The Advisory Editors are: Sir Neville Cardus, Sir Keith Falkner, Charles Groves, Sir Bernard Heinze (Australia), Leo Quayle (South Africa), and Sir Jack Westrup. Writers, all authorities in their fields, include: Martin Cooper, John Warrack, Robert Simpson, and H. Robbins Landon.

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Each week the magazine *Baton* will make a special offer. Among the first are a top-quality budget hi-fi system at a discount of 26%, record albums, free seats for the Sadler's Wells, free record cleaners, and a centenary bust of Berlioz.

What it costs and how to get it

Believe it or not, each issue of THE GREAT MUSICIANS will cost only 13/11—the booklet, record, magazine, special offer, the lot! This amazingly low price is only made possible by modern manufacturing techniques and large print and pressing orders.

THE GREAT MUSICIANS is *not* a record club. You order each issue through your newsagent. Ask him for the first part on March 21st – Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Issue 2 will be Mozart's last piano concerto (K.595), played by Alfred Brendel. Place a regular order for the whole series and build up a superb classical library for yourself and your children. Teachers, of course, will be among the first to appreciate the educational possibilities of the scheme.

We have tried to tell you everything in this advertisement, but if you would also like a full-colour leaflet about THE GREAT MUSICIANS please write to Fabbri & Partners Ltd., Fabbri House, St. James's Place, London S.W.1 (01-499 0671).

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